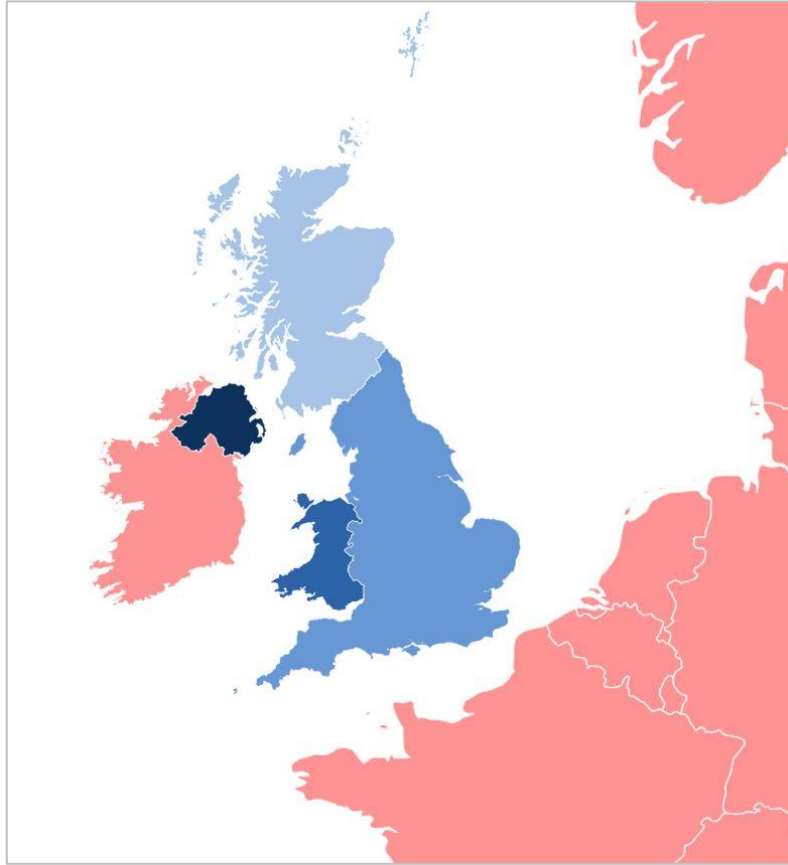


Lord Ashcroft Polls



BREXIT, the border and the Union

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC

June 2018

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Methodology

Quantitative

1,666 adults were interviewed online in Northern Ireland between 24 and 28 May 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Northern Ireland.

3,294 adults in England, Scotland and Wales were interviewed online between 29 and 31 May 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

1,500 adults in the Republic of Ireland were interviewed online between 31 May and 5 June 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in the Republic of Ireland.

Qualitative

Fourteen focus groups were held in Ballymena, Belfast, Dublin, Sligo, Liverpool, Glasgow and Chichester between 8 and 24 May 2018.

Key points

Brexit

- 8% of Leave voters in Great Britain said they had changed their mind and would now prefer to remain in the EU. However, 25% of Remain voters said it is right for Brexit to go ahead given the result of the referendum.
- 62% of British voters, including 69% of Conservatives, 76% of Leave voters and 55% of Remain voters said the Brexit negotiations and decisions about the UK's future outside the EU were happening too slowly. Leave voters who thought this were most likely to blame "politicians in Britain who want a soft Brexit or to stop Brexit altogether" (45%), followed by "the EU and other European governments" (25%). Remain voters were most likely to blame "politicians in Britain who want a hard Brexit" (35%).
- 45% of British voters, including three quarters of remainers and a quarter of leavers, said they would be prepared to accept a longer implementation period after 2020 in order to resolve complex issues. 36%, including a majority of Conservatives and two thirds of Leave voters, agreed this "would just be an excuse for staying in the EU as long as possible – we should leave as currently planned".
- Asked how confident they were on a 100-point scale that Theresa May and her team would be able to negotiate a good deal for the UK in Brexit negotiations, voters in Great Britain gave a mean score of 40 (down from 42 in November 2017). Leave voters gave a score of 50 (down from 54), and Remain voters a score of 30 (unchanged). Conservative voters' confidence had fallen slightly from 62 to 59.
- Asked to rate the importance of five potential Brexit priorities, Northern Ireland Unionists gave the highest score to "the UK being free to negotiate its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU" (80/100), "Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK being treated the same as each other whether they end up being bound by EU rules and regulations or not" (77), and "the UK no longer having to abide by EU rules and regulations" (76). Nationalists' overwhelming priority was "no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland" (94); this was given an importance score of 55 by Unionists and 48 by DUP voters.
- 72% of voters in the Republic of Ireland said they were unhappy that the UK was leaving the EU, and 74% said they thought the UK had made the wrong decision according to the UK's own interests. Just over half thought Brexit would make the Ireland's relationship with Northern Ireland more distant, and two thirds thought it would make Ireland's relationship with the UK as a whole more distant.
- 80% of voters in the Republic of Ireland said they would vote to remain in the EU in a referendum. Three quarters said they felt very (36%) or fairly (40%) positive about Ireland's membership of the EU.

The border

- If they had to choose between leaving the customs union and avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, 41% in Great Britain said they would leave the customs union, 32% said they would stay to avoid a hard border, and 27% didn't know. Two thirds of Conservatives and Leave voters, and one in five remainers, said they would rather leave the customs union than avoid a hard border.
- Nearly two thirds of voters in Northern Ireland (including nine out of ten Nationalists, four in ten Unionists and three in ten Leave voters) agreed that a hard border would be "likely to provoke paramilitary activity and threaten peace and security". 85% of voters in the Republic of Ireland agreed.
- Eight in ten Unionists, but only one in twenty Nationalists, agreed that "modern technology would allow any customs checks to be done quickly and easily, so a border would not be damaging or disruptive"; more than seven in ten Conservatives and Leave voters in Great Britain – but fewer than four in ten voters in the Republic of Ireland – agreed with this statement.
- More than nine in ten Northern Ireland Leave voters and Unionists, and three quarters of Conservatives and Leave voters in Great Britain, agreed that the border issue is being "deliberately exaggerated by politicians and others to suit their own political agenda."
- Leaving the EU customs union and introducing customs checks on the Irish border was the preferred outcome for Leave voters in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, Northern Ireland Unionists would rather the whole UK remained in the customs union than that Northern Ireland remained while the rest of the UK left. The preferred solution for Nationalists was for Northern Ireland to leave the UK and join the Republic, thereby staying in the EU; their most popular second choice was for Northern Ireland to remain in the customs union while the rest of the UK left.
- Only one third of voters in Great Britain (and fewer than half of Conservatives and Leave voters) said it would be completely unacceptable for Northern Ireland to have a different status in the EU from England, Scotland and Wales. Overall, three in ten said such an outcome "would not be ideal, but would be acceptable as part of a deal to get a sensible Brexit arrangement".
- Three quarters of Nationalists and two thirds of Remain voters in Northern Ireland thought Northern Ireland would be more damaged than the Republic of Ireland by the imposition of a hard border. Two thirds of Leave voters in Northern Ireland said the Republic would be more damaged; only one in ten of them said Northern Ireland would come off worst.

The Union

- A majority in Great Britain said they did not have a view as to whether Northern Ireland should be part of the UK, as it was for the people of Northern Ireland to decide. Of this group, 29% said they would be sorry to see Northern Ireland leave the UK, 9% would be happy, and 63% wouldn't mind either way.

- 70% of Nationalists in Northern Ireland, and one in ten Unionists, said there should be a referendum on unification in the next five years. More than half of DUP voters said there should never be a referendum, but fewer than one in five of them thought there never would be. More than eight in ten Nationalists and three in ten Unionists thought there would be a 'border poll' within the next decade.
- Asked how they would vote if a 'border poll' were held tomorrow, 49% in Northern Ireland said they would vote to stay in the UK, 44% said they would vote to leave, and 7% (including nearly three in ten Alliance Party voters) said they didn't know.
- 19 out of 20 Nationalists in Northern Ireland said Brexit had made Irish unification in the foreseeable future more likely. Only a quarter of Unionists agreed, as did four in ten voters in the Republic of Ireland. A majority of Leave voters in Northern Ireland said Brexit had made no difference to the likelihood of Irish unification.
- If it were not possible both to leave the EU and to keep England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales together in the UK, 63% of Leave voters in Great Britain (including 73% of Conservatives) said they would choose to leave the EU. 27% said they would choose to keep the UK together, and one in ten say they didn't know.
- Just over a third of voters in the Republic of Ireland said they would like to see a united Ireland in the next few years. A majority, including two thirds of Fine Gael voters, agreed with the statement "I am in favour of a united Ireland in principle, but it would not be practical or affordable for the Republic of Ireland in the next few years".

All politics is local

Westminster and the DUP deal

In Ballymena, in the Democratic Unionist Party stronghold of North Antrim represented in parliament by Ian Paisley Jr, as it was by his father before him, many of our participants were pleased that their party held the balance of power at Westminster. Even so, though individuals mentioned funding for an air ambulance service, extra NHS resources and the retention of free school meals, most did not feel they had much to show for the extra billion pounds of funding for Northern Ireland agreed as part of the supply and confidence deal with the Conservatives: “We’re still waiting. When you hear they’re having to close schools because there’s no funding...”; “All we’ve heard is they did a deal. We haven’t seen any evidence of a deal.”

“Theresa May has Arlene in her head.”

DUP voter, Ballymena

For many of these voters, the real value of the DUP’s position was to prevent the government betraying the interests of Northern Ireland for a convenient Brexit deal, which it might otherwise be tempted to do “in a heartbeat”: “I think the mainland see us as a problem, an unsolvable problem. A burden, a cost.” Some felt this was partly because people in Britain saw a distorted picture of life in the province, with the most extreme voices to the fore: “If the BBC send someone out to do interviews in the streets of Ballymena, they always pick the most eccentric, wild person they can find.” Some even felt “the British would get rid of us if they could.” That being the case, it was reassuring to know the Prime Minister was reliant on DUP support: “Theresa May in Brussels has got Arlene in her head. The joys of a hung parliament.” For some, the DUP-Conservative deal brought an added bonus: “It annoyed the Shinners, so that’s good.”

By no means everyone who had voted for the party saw the DUP’s socially conservative stance appealing – many of those we spoke to saw it as a downside of its programme. But with a weakened Ulster Unionist Party and an alphabet soup of smaller alternatives, people felt the imperative was to make their votes count: “At least if you vote DUP you know a Unionist is getting in.”

The Stormont stalemate

DUP supporters naturally blamed their opponents for the impasse at Stormont, which resulted largely from Sinn Féin’s proposal to give the Irish language equal status with English (“It’s Sinn Féin game-playing. We don’t need an Irish Language Act, this is Northern Ireland... They should focus on important things like health and education and infrastructure”). Unsurprisingly enough, Sinn Féin voters in our Belfast groups blamed the DUP (“I don’t understand why someone who wants an inclusive Northern Ireland wouldn’t let them just spend money on the Irish Language Act”). Both sides lamented the fact that politics was still dominated by sectarian matters, though many evidently had very strong views on the matters in question.

"They are fostering sectarianism to keep people apart and keep themselves relevant."

Sinn Fein voter, Belfast

Still, many were exasperated by the leaders' apparent inability or unwillingness to prioritise people's real concerns: "It's seems like they always have to have some cause to be dealt with, then we'll look at education;" "They are fostering division and sectarianism to keep people apart and keep themselves relevant. If you drive up the Shankill Road and turn into the Falls Road, they can't bring themselves to admit that the issues they face are the same." People on both sides regretted that the tone of Northern Irish politics had become more rather than less divisive in recent years. As one Sinn Fein voter put it, "Arlene Foster is more polarising than Ian Paisley – the final version of Ian Paisley, the one who sat at the table with Mr. Adams. And Michelle O'Neill [SF leader in the Assembly] is the Catholic version of Arlene Foster".

No-one doubted that huge progress had been made since the Good Friday Agreement: "Look at Belfast today compared to twenty years ago. Everyone wants to come here. You can't move for hotels in the city centre;" "We used to have to look for incendiary devices in clothes shops. I'd be a nervous wreck patting down the clothes every morning. That's never done now;" "My kids couldn't tell you who was a Protestant or a Catholic. It's a new generation."

This made the current state of affairs all the more frustrating. After all the work of recent years, "the country is at a standstill;" "it's better but it should be much better. We should be much further ahead. We're the backyard of Europe, the UK too."

North-South divide?

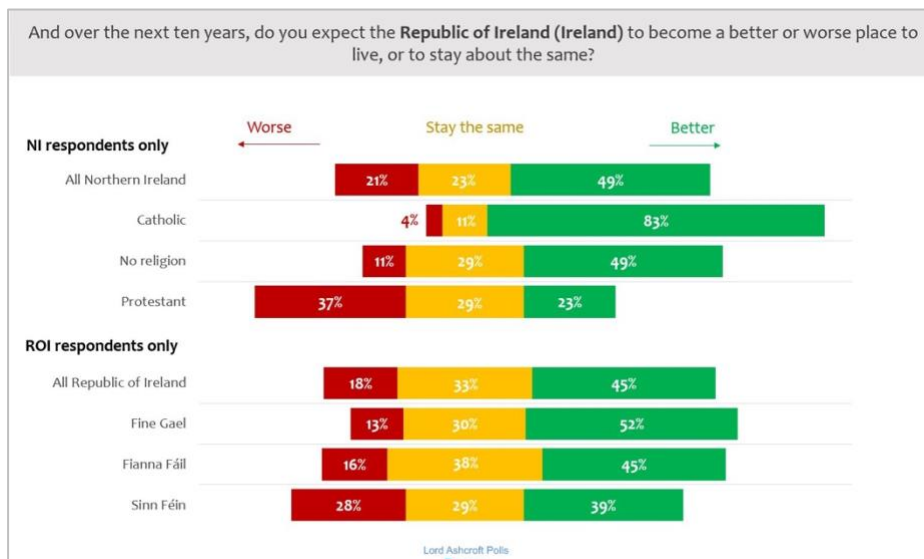
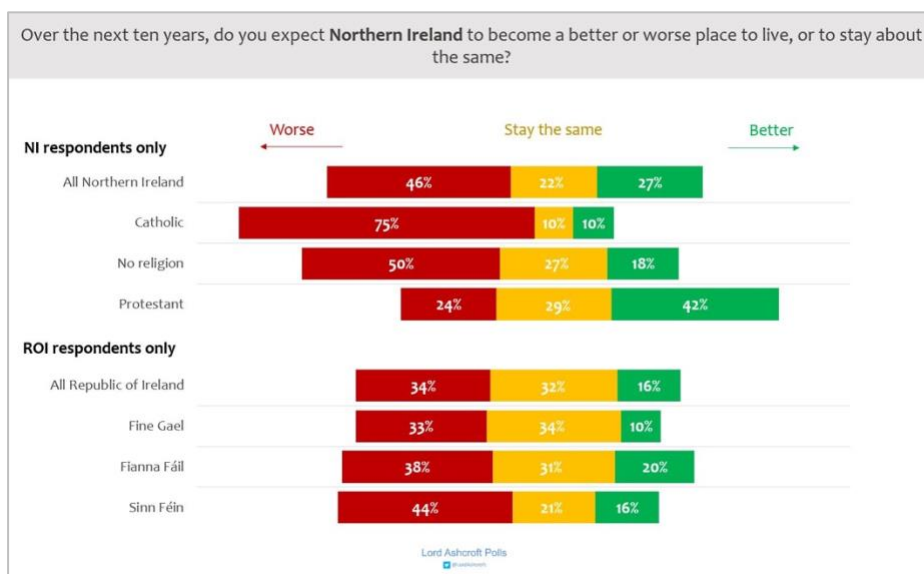
Some in Belfast and Ballymena saw a growing contrast – and an embarrassing one – between Northern Ireland and the Republic: "I live close to the border. When I was a kid you used to be able to tell you were in the South because the roads got bad. Now it's the other way round." The complexities of life in Northern Ireland helped account for the economic contrast: "The Republic of Ireland doesn't need to worry about paramilitaries, the security threat. We've spent twenty years securing the peace. We've spent hundreds of millions on that;" "They never had the troubles. They don't have the same divide." But the difference was more than financial. As one young Alliance voter noted: "Ireland is much more liberal than Northern Ireland. They have gay marriage. Leo Varadkar is gay and half Indian, and we have a court case about a cake that's been going on for three years."

"Ireland is much more liberal than Northern Ireland. They have gay marriage. We have a court case about a cake that's been going on for three years."

Alliance voter, Belfast

Though our groups in Ireland felt that things had recovered since the financial crisis, the improvement was not being felt everywhere: “People are still living month to month. If you’ve still got legacy debt from ten years ago, it’s hand to mouth;” “In urban areas it’s improved. The boom was across the country, but the recovery hasn’t really filtered through;” “The news will tell you it’s recovered, but it hasn’t on the west coast. Maybe in Dublin.” Many spontaneously mentioned the health system: “There are 90 year-old women on trolleys;” “It just fundamentally needs to be fixed;” “I’d rather have your broken [NHS] system.”

While the job market was looking up, the cost of living had rocketed, especially the cost of housing: “If you’re a multinational or a property developer, there’s a lot of money swilling around. But property prices are off the scale, so many people have never been so far from buying a house;” “You’ve got multinationals buying 500 flats and paying 12.5% corporation tax, and individuals paying 52%.”



Our poll found two thirds of respondents in Northern Ireland (including 91% of Catholics and 41% of Protestants) saying they thought Northern Ireland was heading in the wrong direction – though a majority (55%) of those who had voted DUP at the 2017 general election thought it was on the right track. By contrast, a majority (including 92% of Catholics but only a quarter of Protestants) said that from what they knew or had heard, the Republic of Ireland was on the right track.

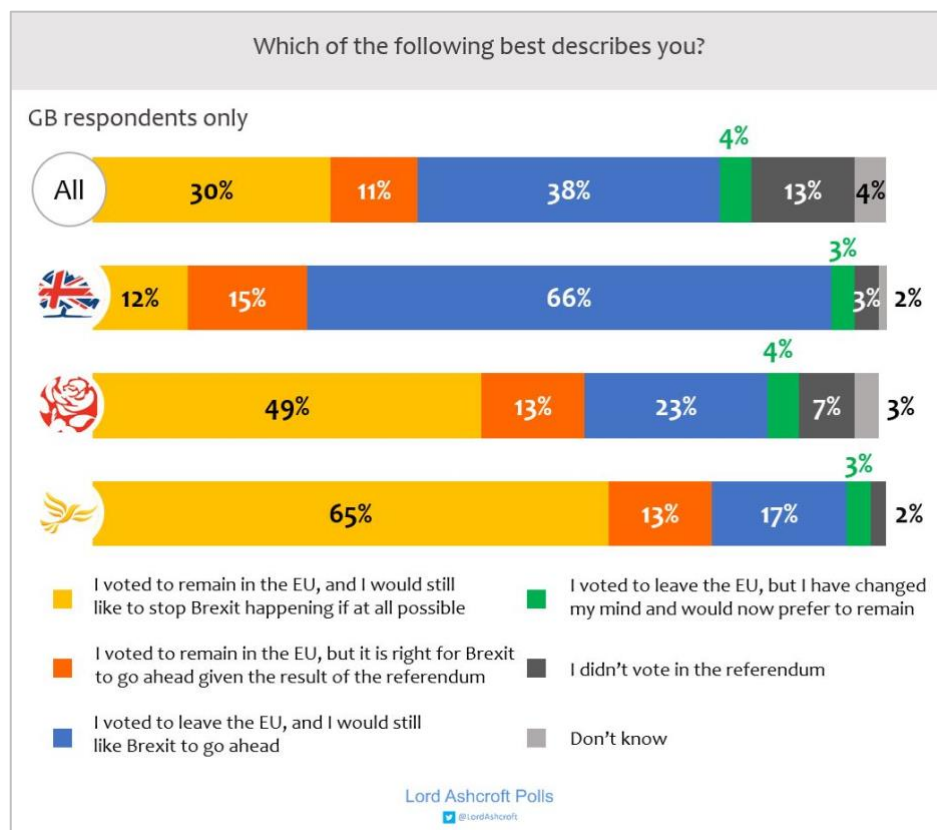
The reverse was true among respondents in the Republic, who were much more optimistic about life in their own country than they were about the prospects for Northern Ireland.

Similarly, people in Northern Ireland were more likely to think the Republic would become a better place to live over the next ten years (49%) than that the same would happen in Northern Ireland (27% - though the optimists included 54% of those who voted DUP). The difference is explained by Catholics believing life in Northern Ireland would get worse and life in the Republic would get better in greater numbers than Protestants thought the opposite.

Brexit and the border

‘Get on with it’

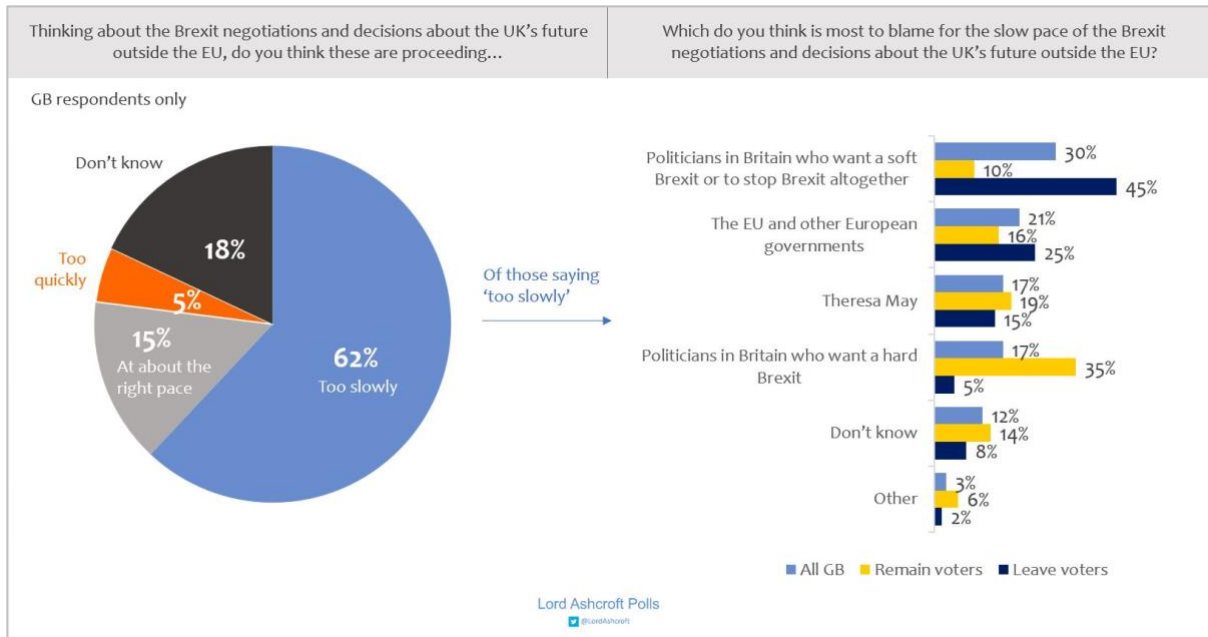
Though our polls and focus groups found some saying they regretted their vote to leave the EU – usually because they felt they were under-informed or misled during the referendum – they were outnumbered by the number of remain voters saying it was right for Brexit to go ahead given the result of the referendum.



Three quarters of Leave voters, and a majority of remainers, said in our GB poll that they thought the Brexit negotiations and decisions about the UK’s future outside the EU were proceeding too slowly. Who people blamed for what they saw as the slow progress depended which side of the debate they were on: nearly half of Leave voters thought responsibility lay with British politicians who wanted a soft Brexit or to stop it altogether, with a quarter blaming the EU and other European governments; remainers who thought things were going too slowly spread the blame more widely, but were most inclined to point the finger at British politicians who wanted a hard Brexit.

“They’re still dragging their heels – the ifs and the whys and the buts.”

Leave voter, Liverpool



In the focus groups, some Leave voters who were hostile to the Conservatives held the party responsible for the slow pace of events: “I blame the Tories, Theresa May. They didn’t expect us to leave. They haven’t got a clue what to do;” “A lot of the hold-up is because of the Conservative leadership battle.”

There was also plenty of criticism for “political elites” more generally: “the way they carry on! When people don’t get what they want, the dummies come right out of the pram.” Politicians seemed to be playing games rather than implementing the will of the people as expressed in the referendum result (“There’s no clarity any more. It goes from parliament to the Lords and back again”), and some were especially critical of the upper House (“The House of Lords is unelected... Who is the House of Lords to decide?”) Several complained that the process had become baffling: “I watched a thing on Brexit for 15 minutes and I was none the wiser.”

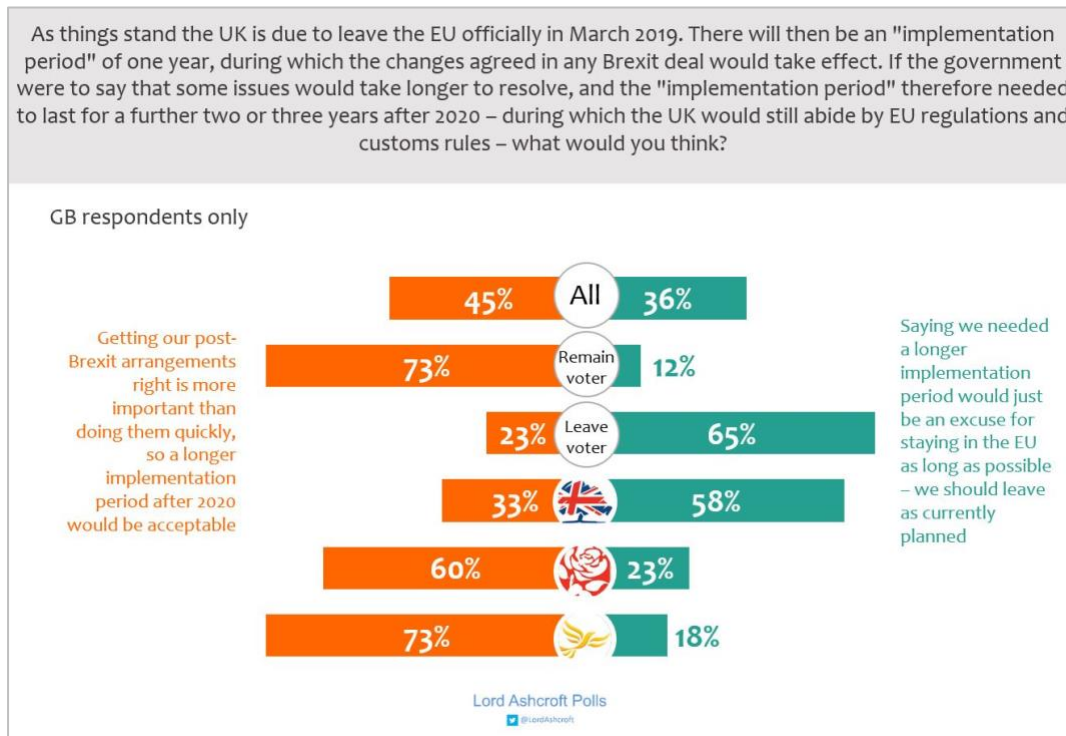
Conservative Leave voters were more sympathetic to the government’s situation, and to Theresa May in particular: “There’s probably a lot to put into place. It wasn’t ever going to happen overnight;” “I think she’s doing the best she can. She’s picked on by the men. She’s doing everything they asked her to do but she still gets moaned at.”

They were also particularly likely to put the apparent lack of progress down to EU intransigence: “Brussels are making it as difficult as they possibly can. As long as we’re still there, they’re still getting money out of us. They want to have their cake and eat it;” “We’re the first ones to say we want out, so they will beat us with a big stick. They don’t want other countries following suit. We will come out stronger the other side and they fear the domino effect.”

However, some Conservative leavers thought the government should be tougher in its approach: “I’m concerned we will end up with a watered-down version. I don’t think we have a strong enough negotiating team. We’ve got a PM who wanted to stay and the people dealing with it wanted to stay. There’s a lot of appeasement going on.”

Extended implementation?

We asked in our GB poll how people would react if the government were to announce a longer ‘implementation period’ after the official leave date of March 2019. Overall, people were more likely to think that “getting our post-Brexit arrangements right is more important than doing them quickly” and that extending the implementation period for a further two or three years would be acceptable (45%) than that this would “just be an excuse for staying in the EU as long as possible” and that we should leave as currently planned (36%).



While a majority of 2017 Conservatives (58%) and two thirds of Leave voters took the latter view, Remain voters broke more decisively in favour of accepting a longer implementation period (73% to 12%).

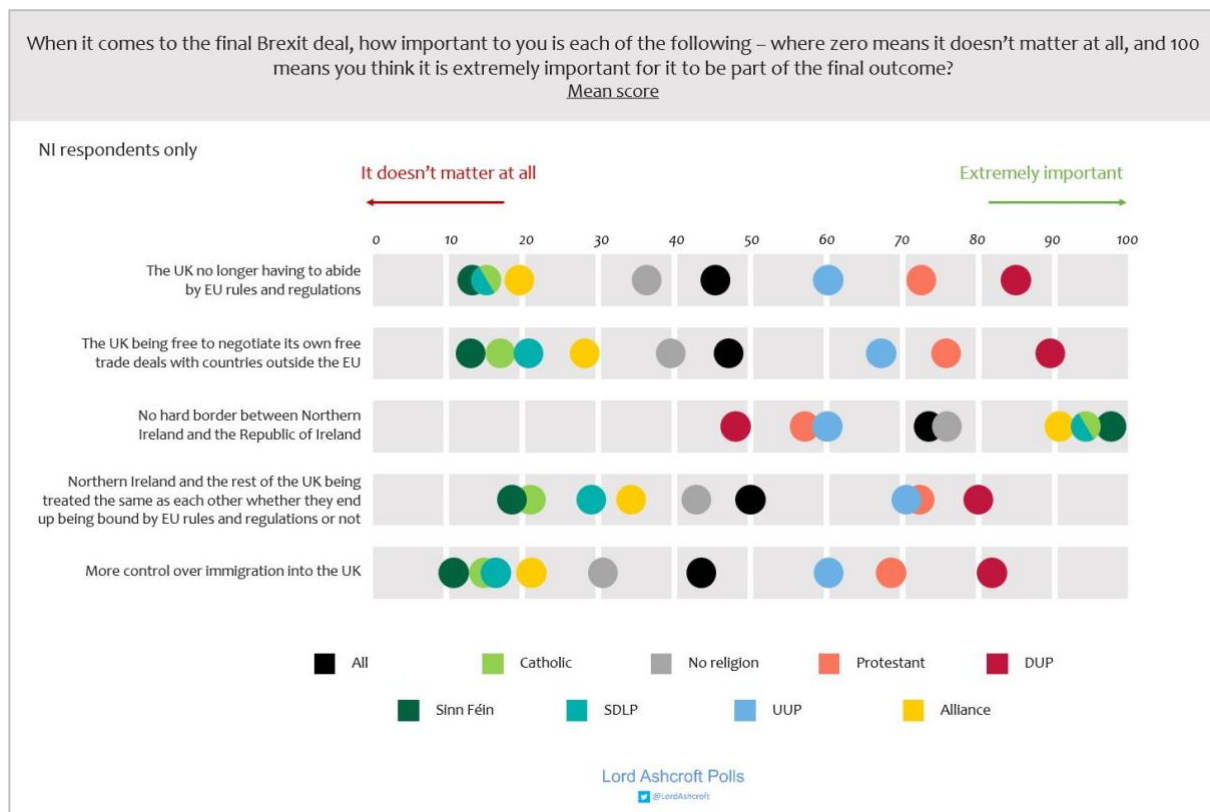
This split among leavers was reflected in the focus groups: while some were resigned or prepared to be patient (“I think we’ll get the things we voted for. It’s just that the transition will take time. We might not benefit for three or four years but in the long term we will”), there were complaints that “they keep moving the goalposts.”

Several suspected that this was a deliberate ploy on the part of remain-supporting politicians: “They want it to go on because they hope it will just fade away and people will eventually say ‘stay as we are’.” Deliberate or not, this was the effect in some cases: “I’m bored of it;” “Everyone seems to be losing interest. A lot of people are more interested in sorting the NHS out;” “We pay our taxes and it’s for them to sort out. I look after people every day who have more important things to worry about.”

Northern Ireland – Brexit priorities

Asked to rate the importance of five potential priorities for the Brexit negotiations, Northern Ireland Unionists gave the highest score to “the UK being free to negotiate its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU” (80/100). This was followed closely by “Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK being treated the same as each other whether they end up being bound by EU rules and regulations or not” (77), “the UK no longer having to abide by EU rules and regulations” (76) and “more control over immigration into the UK” (72).

For Nationalists there was only one overwhelming priority: “no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland” (94). This was given an importance score of 55 by Unionists and 48 by DUP voters.

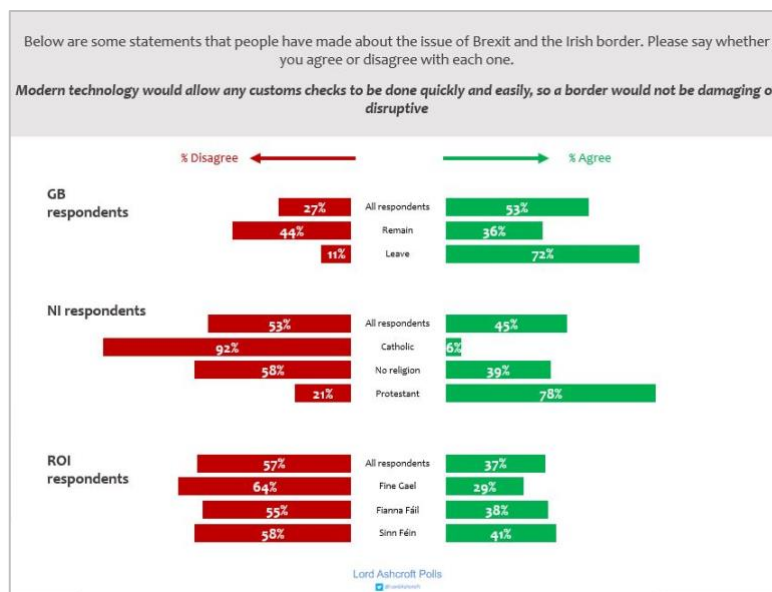


Border practicalities

In the groups, people on all sides of the debate often said that they could not remember the Irish border being mentioned during the EU referendum campaign. Even so, few of our Unionist participants in Northern Ireland had any serious qualms about the idea of a hard border with the Republic. Though it might cause some initial disruption to businesses, “we would get used to it.” After all, “there are countries in the EU that have got a border with non-EU countries. Look and learn. The technology is there.” It was in nobody’s interests for the border to prevent swift and easy movement (“the car park at ASDA in Strabane is full of cars from the south every weekend”), so the idea that it would cause real problems was “scaremongering”.

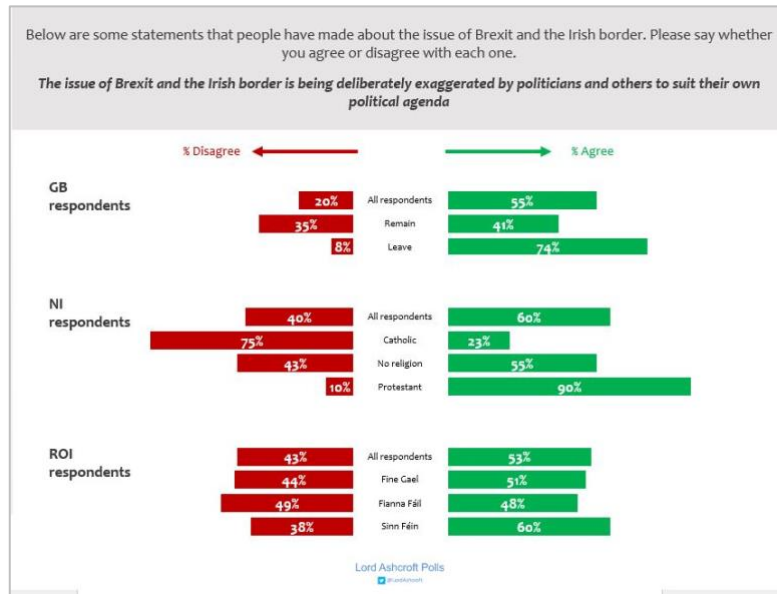
“There are countries in the EU that have got a border with non-EU countries. Look and learn.”
DUP voter, Northern Ireland

Elsewhere in the UK, the border question seemed obscure and complicated to many. There was a widespread feeling, particularly among Leave voters, that the problem was being exaggerated by the Irish government (“Part of me thinks Ireland is delighted to be a powerful voice in Europe”), the EU (“they’re saying it’s an issue to try and push us onto the remain side”) and anti-Brexit politicians in Britain (“It was never mentioned in the Brexit debate, and now it’s being used as a political tool;” “They’re making a big deal out of it because they know it causes strong feelings. They don’t give people information but they’ve got people arguing about it”). As in Northern Ireland, many argued that other countries have peaceful borders with no problems at all: “How many times do you travel abroad and go through customs and passports?” “There is a way of having a hard border and not showing aggression – you just have it as any other border. They’re making it out to be a problem for propaganda.”



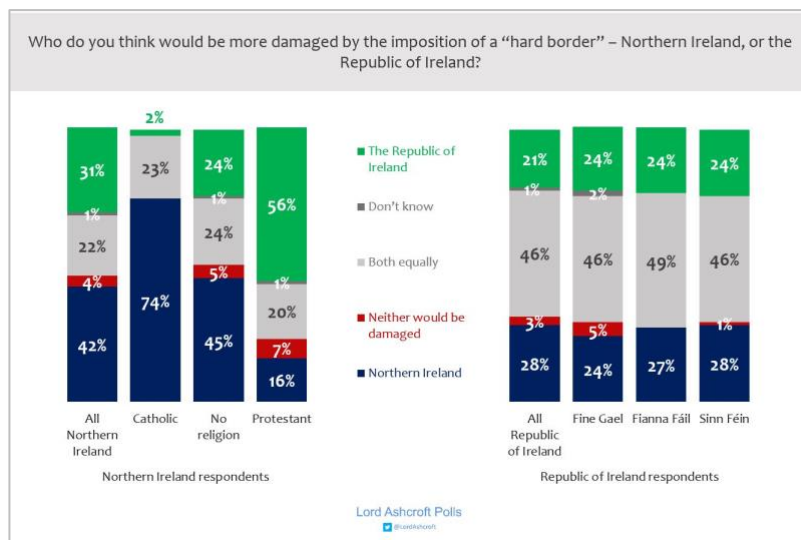
A majority in Great Britain, including three quarters of Conservative voters, agreed that “modern technology would allow any customs checks to be done quickly and easily, so a border would not be damaging or disruptive”. Only 36% of Remain voters agreed. In Northern Ireland, more than eight out of ten Unionists (and nine out of ten DUP supporters) agreed with the statement – compared to just 6 per cent of Nationalists and 3 per cent of Sinn Fein voters. Fewer than four in ten voters in the Republic of Ireland agreed that technology would mean a border would not be damaging or disruptive.

Northern Ireland Unionists overwhelmingly agreed that “the issue of Brexit and the Irish border is being deliberately exaggerated by politicians and others to suit their own political agenda”. More than one in five Nationalists agreed. So did a majority in Great Britain, including three quarters of Leave voters and four in ten remainers.



There was disagreement as to who would be damaged most by the imposition of a hard border. Three quarters of Nationalists thought Northern Ireland would be worst hit, while six in ten Unionists thought the Republic of Ireland had the most to lose. Only 13% of Unionists and 6% of DUP voters thought Northern Ireland would be more damaged by a hard border than the Republic.

In the Republic of Ireland, nearly half thought the two sides would be equally damaged by the imposition of a hard border. The remainder were slightly more likely to think Northern Ireland would be hurt most than the reverse.



The border and the peace process

Most of the Unionist leave voters we spoke to dismissed the suggestion that a border would be a threat to peace. No-one wanted to relive the experience of crossing the border that they remembered from their youth (“quite a scary experience – guns, bricked-up checkpoints”), but for these voters, there was no reason why this should happen: “The border will be there for different reasons. It’s not because of bringing in guns and bombs.”

Our Nationalist participants were much less sanguine about the potential security implications: “There would have to be some physical infrastructure and it’s seriously naïve to think it won’t be attacked, and one thing leads to another. That’s what they’re leading us into.”

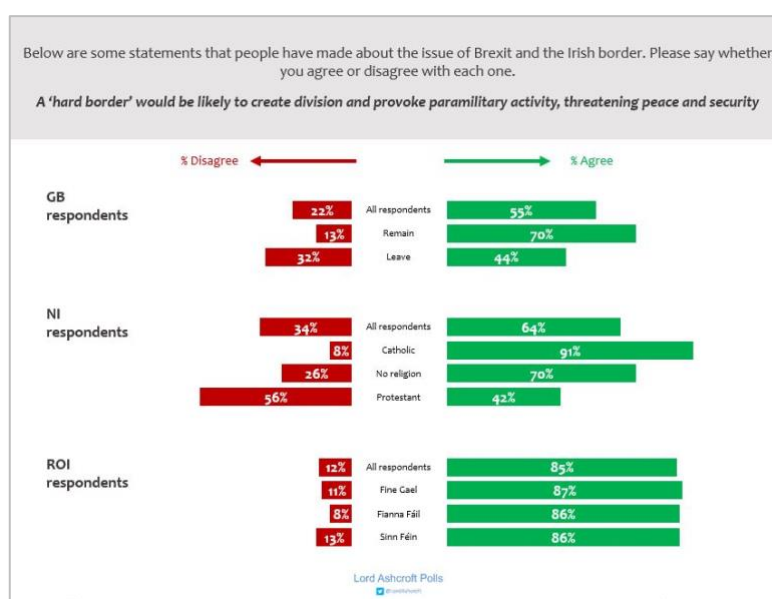
“I can’t believe MI5 aren’t saying to Theresa May, ‘whatever you do, love, don’t have border posts’.”

Fine Gael voter, Dublin

People in Dublin and Sligo also expressed fears about peace and security: “Once you start talking about borders and checkpoints again, it’s bringing it all back, that rawness;” “I can’t believe MI5 aren’t saying to Theresa May, ‘whatever you do, love, don’t have border posts’.”

Our polls confirmed this pattern. Overall, nearly two thirds of Northern Ireland respondents agreed (strongly or somewhat) that “a ‘hard border’ would be likely to create division and provoke paramilitary activity, threatening peace and security”. While this included nine out of ten Nationalists, fewer than four in ten Unionists – and only three in ten Leave voters and a quarter of DUP supporters – agreed with the statement. In the Republic of Ireland, 85% agreed with the statement.

In Great Britain, just over half agreed with the same statement, including two thirds of Labour voters and seven in ten Remain voters, but fewer than half of Leave voters and Conservatives.



The border as a symbol

To our groups of remain-voting Sinn Fein supporters, naturally, the issue looked very different. They saw DUP voters’ acceptance of a hard border as a ploy to separate Northern Ireland from the Republic and cement its place in the UK. At the same time, their objections were less often to do with any economic or administrative consequences than they were with the symbolism of a visible border on an island they thought of as one country: “We’ve spent so long trying to get away from all that;” “We’re one country. We don’t need a border. We don’t want to go back to how it was.” Many of them saw the border question in the same terms as the debate over the Irish language or the question of whether the Union flag should fly over public buildings: “How do you express your Irishness? They can express their identity but we don’t. Unionists never seem to be able to get out of their mindset about dominating the other community.”

“We’re one country. We don’t need a border.”

Sinn Fein voter, Belfast

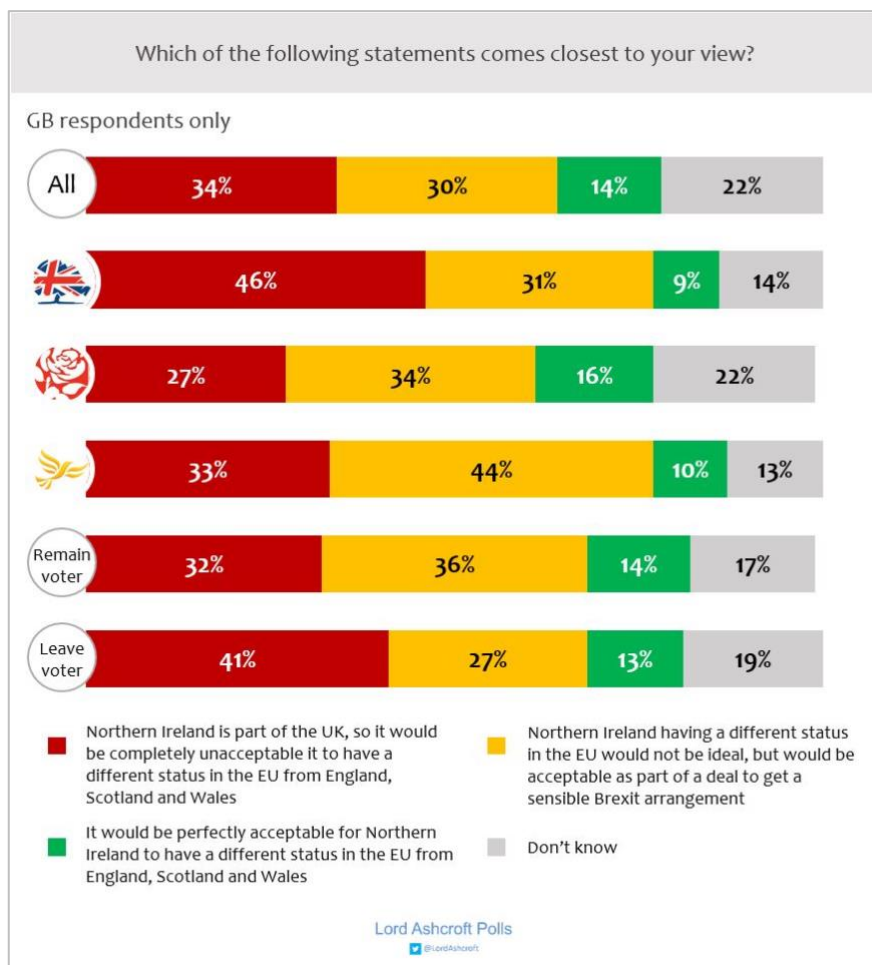
As with the Nationalists we spoke to in Belfast, our Dublin and Sligo were at least as unhappy with the symbolism as the practicalities when it came to the prospect of a hard border, and the feeling that it would be a backward step: “It would be so sad to see. It’s putting us back in time. The whole politics of the past;” “To me it’s not a different country. We travel freely up and down;” “They’re saying it’s not a military border, it’s a customs border, but people still see it as a border;” “A lot of history is ingrained. It’s the fear. I remember vividly crossing the black line and a soldier with a gun sticking his head in the car. It might be a softer border, but...;” “We thought we were moving on, the border had been taken away, we’re working together, this is good.”



In our poll, Nationalists were practically unanimous in agreeing that “whether or not it is practical, a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would be a very negative symbol”. A majority of Unionists and four in ten DUP voters agreed, as did 78% of Remain voters and 48% of Leave voters in Great Britain. Nine in ten respondents in the Republic of Ireland also agreed.

A border in the Irish Sea

The idea of a customs border in the Irish Sea seemed the least bad option to many of our Nationalist participants: “For me it’s more about keeping Ireland together. The context is an all-Ireland economy. That’s what makes most sense.” Naturally out of the question for our DUP voters, the idea also troubled some who had voted for the Alliance Party: “Staying in the customs union is the least bad because of freedom of movement in Ireland, but where does that leave us with the UK?”



People in England, Scotland and Wales felt much less strongly about this question than the Unionists we spoke to in Northern Ireland. Our GB poll found only one in three people in England, Scotland and Wales (and fewer than half of Conservatives) saying it would be completely unacceptable for Northern Ireland to have a different status in the EU from the rest of the UK. Though only 14% thought this arrangement would be “perfectly acceptable”, three in ten thought it would not be ideal “but would be acceptable as part of a deal to get a sensible Brexit arrangement.” More than one in five said they did not know what they thought.

The border and the customs union

We found in our focus groups that people often did not realise that continued membership of the EU customs union would mean the UK was unable to negotiate its own free-trade deals with non-EU countries. Once this was understood, most Leave voters and even many remainers felt it was necessary for the UK to leave the customs union to honour the referendum result: “That was half the reason people voted to leave – make our own trade deals and sort ourselves out;” “We voted to make our own decisions.”

Most of the Unionist Leave voters we spoke to in Northern Ireland felt the same way. If the UK could not do independent trade deals with non-EU states unless there was a hard border with the Republic, “that’s all right. If we’re staying in the customs union there was no point voting for Brexit.”

They also argued that a border with the EU would be needed in any event unless the UK were to remain bound by the free movement of people: “There needs to be a hard border because you can’t stop immigration without a border. We would get lorryloads from France.”

“If we’re staying in the customs union there was no point voting for Brexit.”

DUP voter, Belfast

The options and trade-offs

We asked our poll respondents throughout the UK and Ireland how they would rank four potential solutions to the Irish border question: the whole UK leaving the customs union, even if this meant customs checks at the border; the whole UK staying in the customs union, even if this meant abiding by EU rules and not being able to do its own free-trade deals; Northern Ireland staying in the customs union while the rest of the UK leaves; or Northern Ireland unifying with the Republic of Ireland, thereby staying in the EU.

Great Britain

Among Leave voters in England, Scotland and Wales, by far the most popular option was for the whole of the UK to leave the customs union, even if this meant customs checks at the Irish border. Nearly six in ten of them chose this option. The next most popular – though with only 16% putting it as their first choice – was for Northern Ireland to stay in the customs union while the rest of the UK left. Only just over one in ten British leave voters thought the best option was for the whole UK to stay in the customs union to avoid a hard border. British Leave voters were more likely to choose Northern Ireland leaving the UK and joining the Republic of Ireland (14%) than keeping the whole UK in the EU customs union.

For the majority of Remain voters, the best solution was for the whole UK to remain in the EU customs union. However, they were slightly more likely to choose the whole UK leaving the customs union than Northern Ireland staying while England, Scotland and Wales left.

Northern Ireland

For Unionists, Protestants and Leave voters, leaving the EU customs union even if this meant customs checks at the Irish border was by far the most popular first choice of the four potential outcomes. Unionists were more likely to support the whole of the UK staying in the customs union than Northern Ireland remaining a member while the rest of the UK left.

The most popular answer for Nationalists was for Northern Ireland to leave the UK and join the Republic of Ireland, thereby remaining in the EU. The whole of the UK staying in the customs union was the next most likely to be named as their first choice. However, more than two thirds of Nationalists put Northern Ireland staying in the customs union while the rest of the UK left as their second choice.

Republic of Ireland

Voters’ preferred solution in the Republic of Ireland was for the whole UK to stay in the customs union. While, by a tiny margin, the second most popular first choice overall was for Northern Ireland to unify with the Republic, this was largely accounted for by Sinn Fein voters: Fine Gael and Fianna Fail supporters preferred the idea of Northern Ireland staying in the customs union, with a border in the Irish Sea.

The UK is currently part of a customs union with the EU. A customs union is when a group of countries allow tariff-free trade between them without any customs checks, and they all agree to apply the same tariffs to goods from external countries. If the UK leaves the customs union when it leaves the EU, this could mean the UK no longer having to abide by EU regulations and being able to do free trade deals with countries outside the EU, but it could also mean a 'hard border' with customs checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Several solutions have been suggested to the issue of Brexit and the Irish border. Please rank the following from 1 to 4, where 1 means you think it is the best option and 4 means you think it is the worst option.

NB: Rank (% naming as first choice in brackets)

		The whole of the UK leaving the EU Customs Union, even if this means customs checks at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	The whole of the UK staying in the EU Customs Union or starting a new customs partnership with the EU, even if this means the UK still being subject to EU laws and regulations and not being able to do its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU	Northern Ireland remaining in the EU Customs Union or being part of a new customs partnership with the EU while the rest of the UK leaves, with a border in the Irish Sea and customs checks between Britain and the island of Ireland	Northern Ireland leaving the UK and becoming part of the Republic of Ireland, thereby staying in the EU
GB respondents	All	1 (38%)	2 (34%)	3 (16%)	4 (13%)
	Remain	2 (19%)	1 (57%)	3 (13%)	4 (10%)
	Leave	1 (59%)	4 (11%)	2 (16%)	3 (14%)
NI respondents	All	1 (36%)	3 (22%)	4 (11%)	2 (32%)
	Catholic	4 (5%)	2 (16%)	3 (11%)	1 (68%)
	No religion	2 (28%)	3 (23%)	4 (17%)	1 (32%)
	Protestant	1 (62%)	2 (25%)	3 (9%)	4 (4%)
ROI respondents	All	4 (14%)	1 (44%)	3 (21%)	2 (21%)
	Fine Gael	3 (14%)	1 (55%)	2 (19%)	4 (12%)
	Fianna Fáil	4 (11%)	1 (47%)	2 (22%)	3 (20%)
	Sinn Féin	3 (15%)	2 (33%)	4 (15%)	1 (37%)

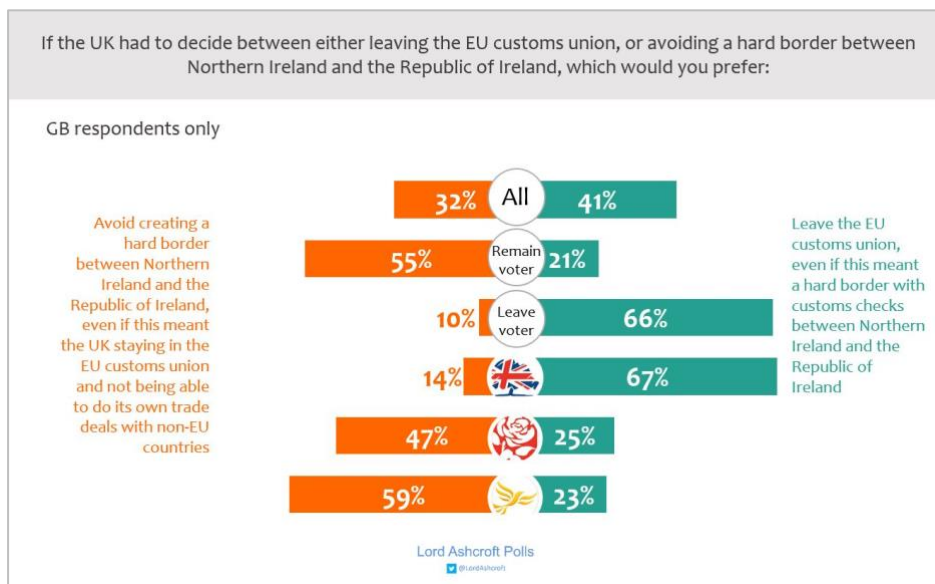
Lord Ashcroft Polls @lordashcroft

Decision time

If it came to a straight choice between leaving the customs union and creating a hard border on the one hand, or avoiding a hard border and staying in the customs union on the other, what would people in Great Britain prefer?

41% said they would rather leave the customs union (including two thirds of Conservatives and leavers, and more than one in five Remain voters), while 32% said they would prefer to stay in the customs union and avoid a hard border (including 55% of remainers and just one in ten Leave voters). 27% of all respondents said they didn't know.

"I say give them back to the Irish and that sorts it out once and for all."
Leave voter, Chichester



In our English and Scottish groups, some had little patience for the idea that the UK should remain in the customs union and be prevented from doing its own trade deals because of the Irish border: "Leave. The clue is in the word;" "Out is out in my eyes. The country voted out so we should leave. You can't be half in, half out;" "I say give them back to the Irish and that sorts it out once and for all."

Confidence in the final deal

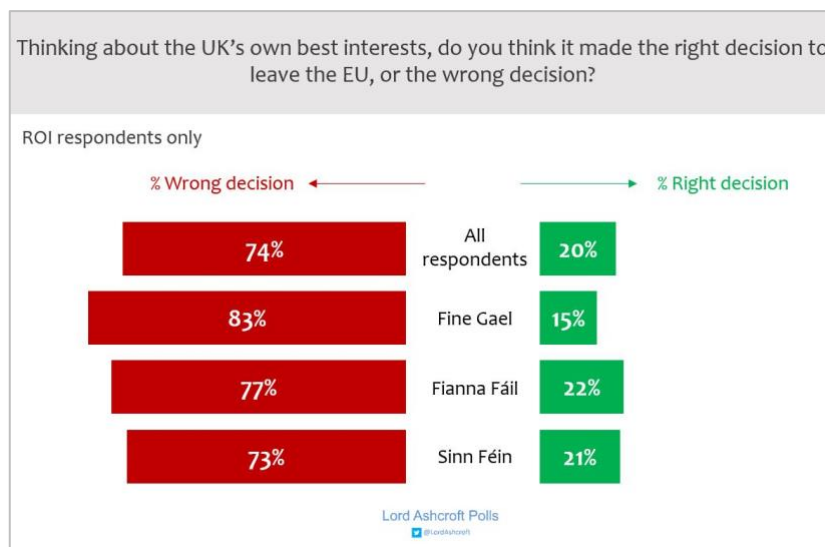
Asked how confident they were that Theresa May and her team would be able to negotiate a good deal for the UK in the Brexit negotiations, where zero meant they had no confidence at all and 100 meant they had total confidence, respondents in Great Britain gave a mean score of 40 (down from 42 in November 2017). Leave voters gave a score of 50 (down from 54), and Remain voters a score of 30 (unchanged). Conservative voters' confidence had fallen slightly from 62 to 59.

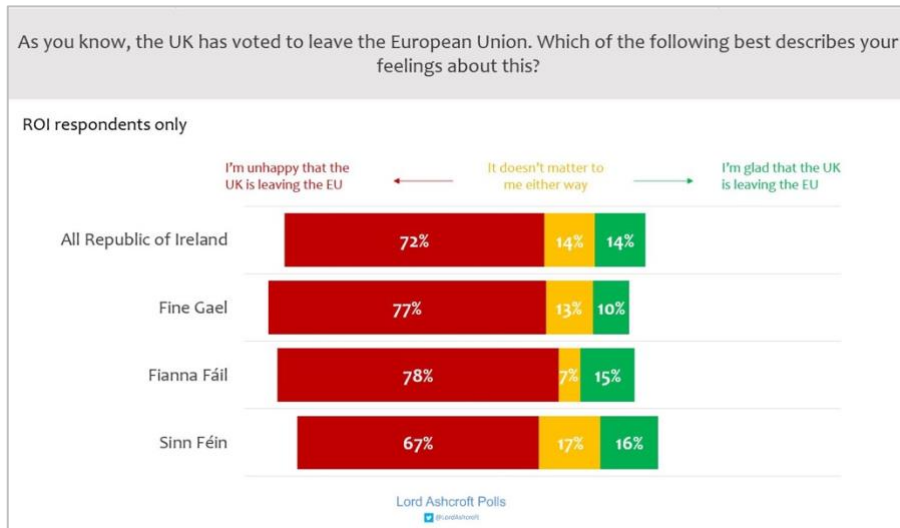


Brexit – the view from Ireland

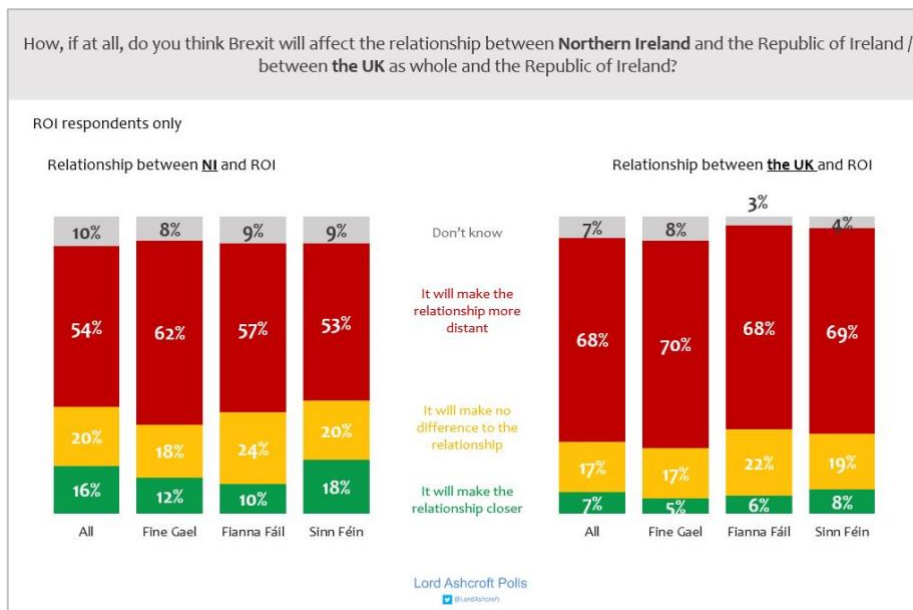
One thing that united our focus groups in the Republic of Ireland – Fine Gael voters in Dublin and Fianna Fail supporters in the north-western city of Sligo – was the conviction that by voting for Brexit the UK had made a terrible mistake which it would regret, if it didn’t already: “They misunderstood what they were doing;” “Places like the North East are wholly reliant on foreign investment. It’s like turkeys voting for Christmas;” “It was for all the wrong reasons. ‘We are Britain and we’re going to be great again, we’re not going to have the EU telling us what to do, we won the war’.”

This was confirmed by our poll, which found three quarters of voters in the Republic of Ireland thinking that, even according to its own interests, the UK had made the wrong decision in choosing to leave the EU. More than seven in ten said they were unhappy that the UK was leaving.

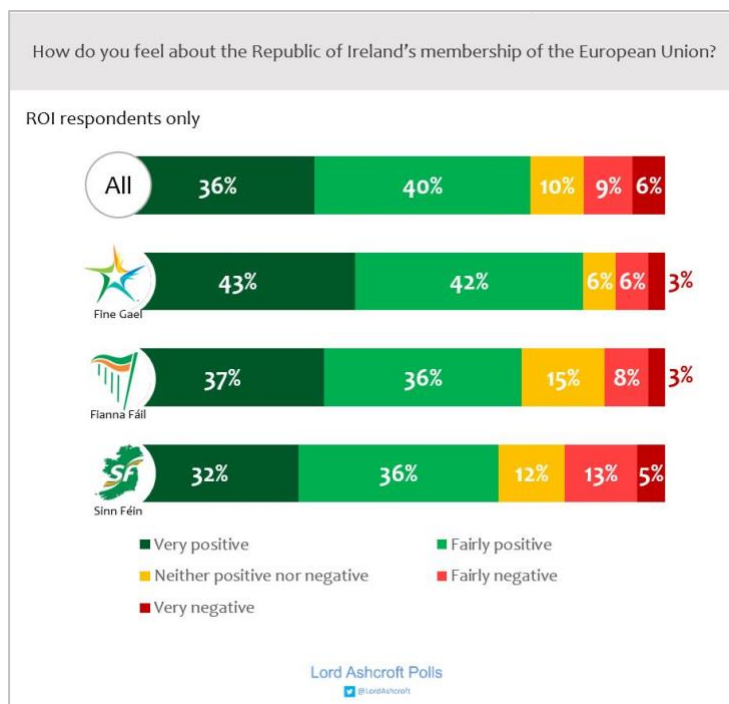




More than half said they thought Brexit would make the relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland more distant. Two thirds said the same was true of Ireland’s relationship with the UK as a whole.



A few conceded that British voters might have a different perspective from their own: “In Ireland, if we didn’t have the EU, what would we be? Just a tiny little country. The UK are much more prominent in the global scheme of things and think they’re more self-sufficient, which they probably are.” Still, one added ruefully, “in Ireland we’d have a second referendum to get the right result.”



Three quarters said they felt positive about Ireland's membership of the EU, including more than one third saying they felt very positive. Eight in ten said they would vote for Ireland to remain in the EU if there were a referendum.

Brexit's impact on the Republic of Ireland

Many feared Brexit would have a “massive impact” on Ireland, especially on agriculture: “If you’re producing beef or dairy and your biggest market is across the Irish Sea... Our biggest trade is with the UK but that’s all up in the air. The currency fluctuations are enormous.” Though there might be opportunities to attract British companies who wanted their headquarters in the EU, not everyone was optimistic on this score: “If you’re a UK company, your first look is Dublin, but it’s not that attractive. We have a housing crisis, an expensive health system, so the consequence of our policies is that we can’t benefit from Brexit. We should be able to say ‘over here, lads’, but for most of the big corporations Dublin doesn’t compete with Paris or Frankfurt.”

“We used to see the UK as a powerful country that knew how to organise itself in a time of crisis, but now they don’t know what to do.”

Fianna Fail voter, Sligo

Another problem was uncertainty, exacerbated or at least prolonged by what they saw as the UK’s inability to decide what it wanted: “The British want to have their cake and eat it. Two years later no-one knows what they want, even the Tory party. Theresa May says one thing and Boris Johnson says another. Until they decide, we might as well sit and wait;” “They can’t make up their mind. We used to see it as a powerful country that knew how to organise itself in a time of crisis, but now they don’t know what to do;” “When there are negotiations with other countries it’s usually Ireland who say ‘it’ll be all right on the night’ and it’s the UK saying ‘this is how it’s going to be’. So it’s a complete role-reversal.”

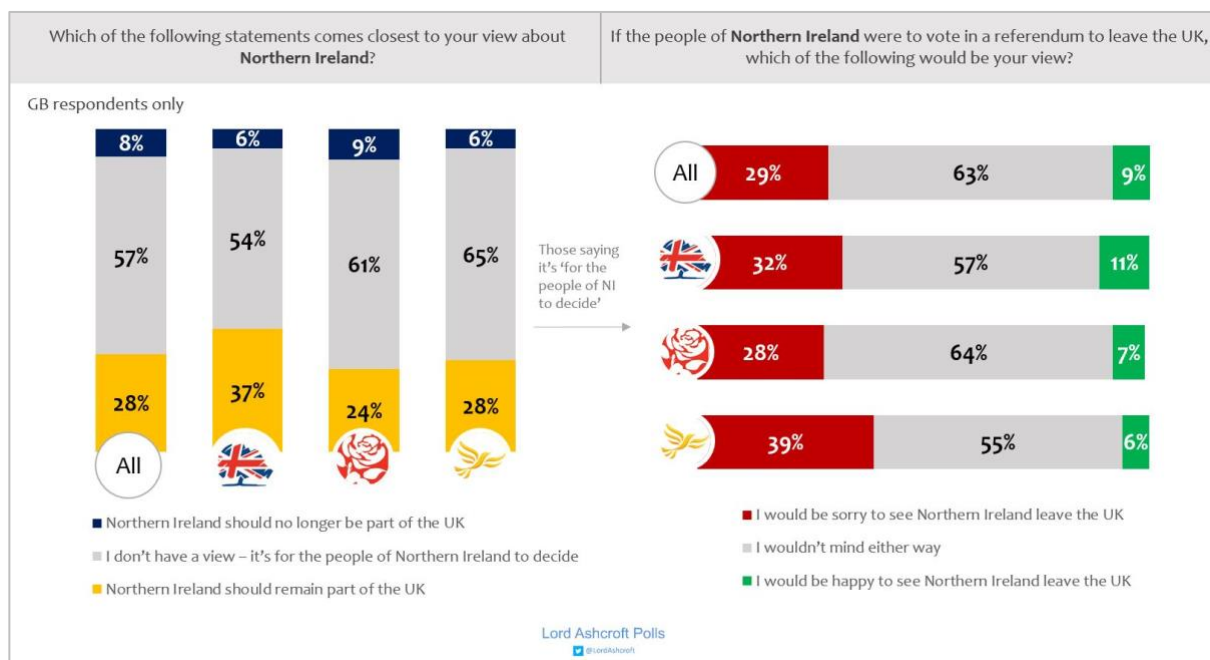
While there were mixed views about Leo Varadkar (“a breath of fresh air,” “young and different,” “trying to engage in the way life is going” for our Fine Gael voters; “out of touch,” “out of his depth,” “the Taoiseach of Dublin” for our Fianna Fail supporters three hours to the west), most agreed that his stance on Brexit was clear and right. They also respected the way he had apparently marshalled senior EU figures to support the country’s position: “He’s been hard core holding the line. It shows good leadership qualities;” “He has done well to articulate the case and bring European leaders to the table saying the Irish border situation will be protected;” “If Brexit goes ahead, Ireland will do well because of the friends it has made in the EU.”

Brexit and the Union

Views of the Union

Asked whether or not Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK, a majority of voters in England, Scotland and Wales (including a majority of Conservatives) said “I don’t have a view – it’s for the people of Northern Ireland to decide” – though the remainder were much more likely to say Northern Ireland should stay in the UK than that it should leave.

In the event that Northern Ireland voted in a referendum to leave the UK, those who had said it was up to the people of Northern Ireland were much more likely to say they would be sorry (29%) than that they would be happy (9%). More than six in ten (63%), however, said they “wouldn’t mind either way”.

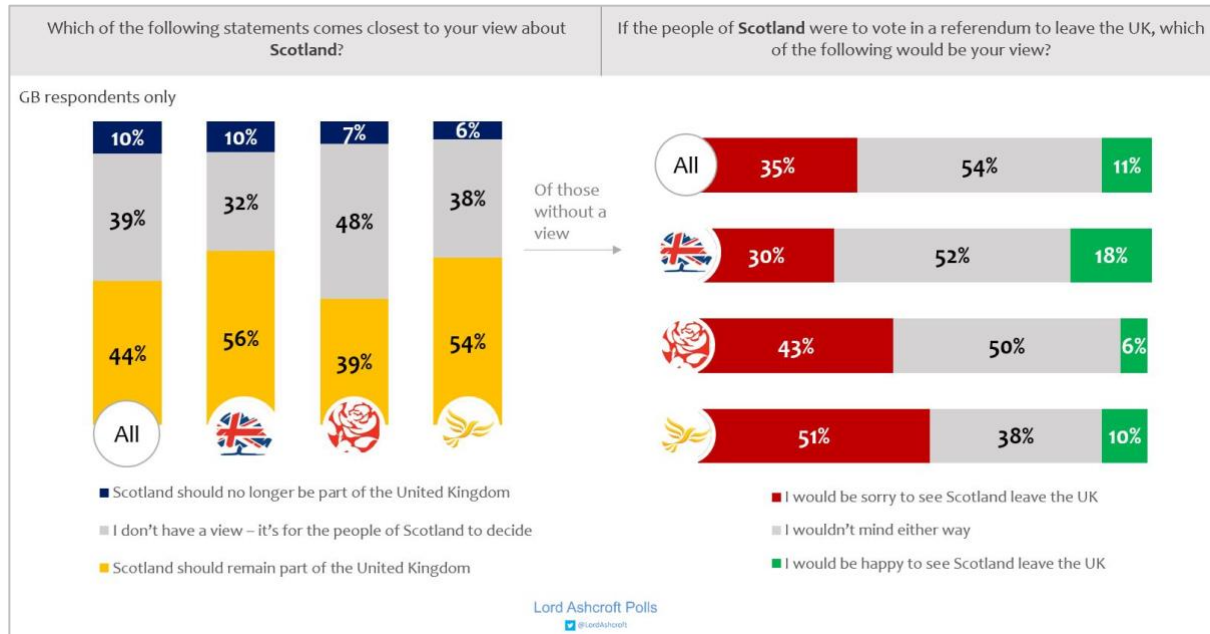


Asked a similar series of questions, people were more likely to say Scotland should remain part of the UK than was the case for Northern Ireland, and those who said it was a matter for the Scottish people were more likely to say they would be sorry to see Scotland leave if that was what it decided to do – though again a majority (54%) said they wouldn’t mind either way.

“It should be part of a united Ireland. It makes geographical sense. There is a sea.”
 Leave voter, Liverpool

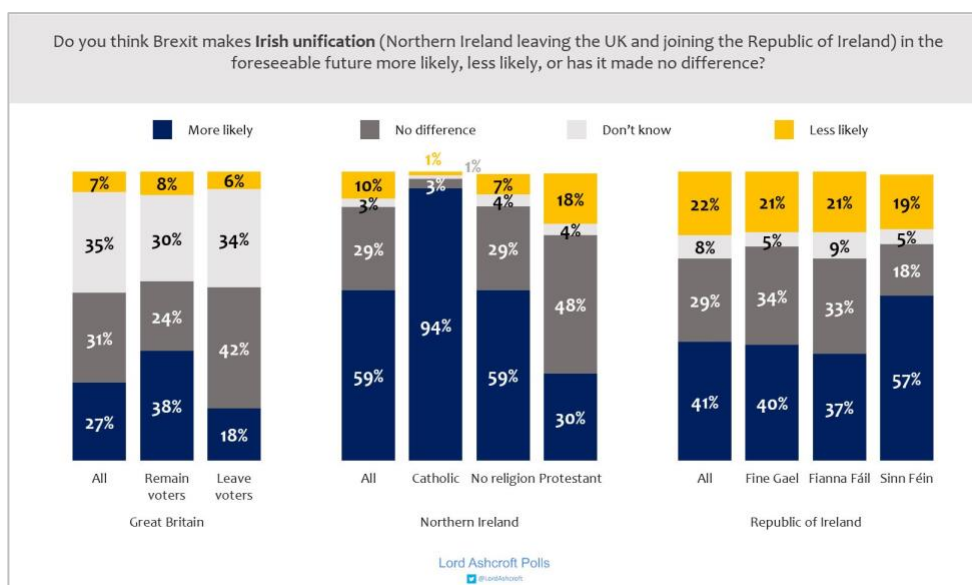
These views were reflected in our focus groups in England and Scotland. Though there was no desire to see Northern Ireland leave, many seemed to regard its membership of the UK as an historical curiosity and would have no objection to Irish unification if that was what people in

Northern Ireland decided: “It should be part of a united Ireland. It makes geographical sense. There is a sea;” “Good luck to them. It would mean less problems for us. If they want to go, let them go;” “Let them do it. You can’t force it on them to leave or stay.”



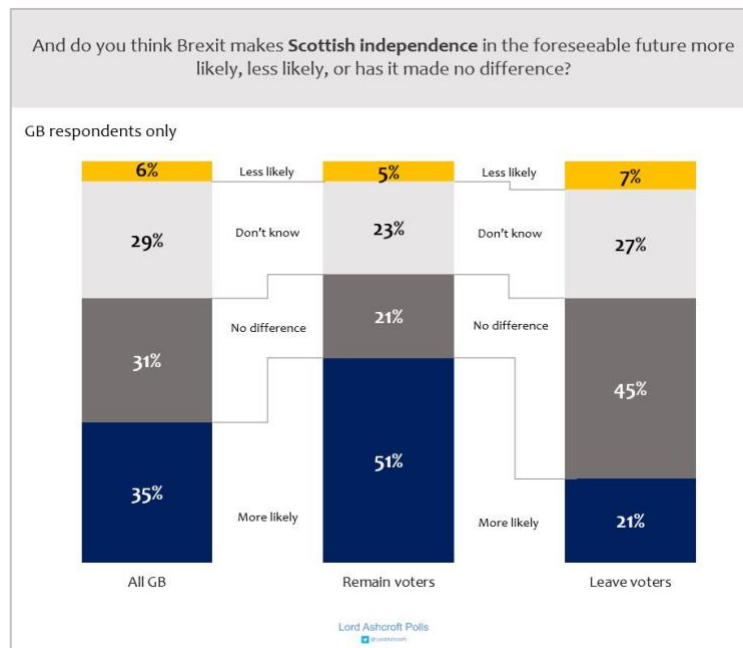
Brexit as a spur to Irish unification?

A majority of voters in Northern Ireland said in our poll that they thought Brexit had made Irish unification in the foreseeable future more likely. Catholics thought this overwhelmingly (94%). Nearly half of Protestants and a majority of DUP voters said Brexit would make no difference, but more of the remainder thought it would make unification more likely (30%) than less (18%). In the Republic of Ireland, just over four in ten thought Brexit had made unification more likely. People were more likely to think it had either made unification less likely (22%) or had made no difference (29%).



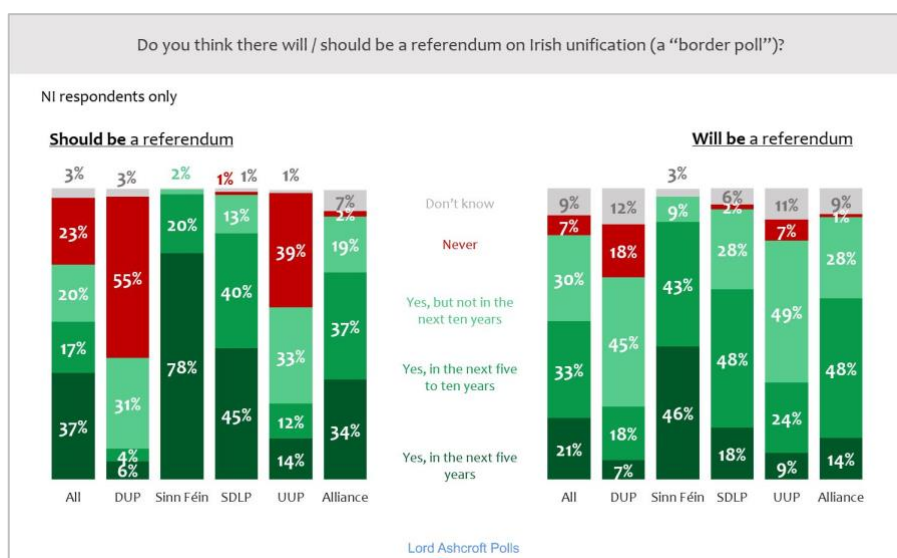
In Great Britain, Remain voters (38%) were more likely than Leave voters (18%) to think Brexit had made Irish unification in the foreseeable future more likely. More than one third of respondents overall said they didn't know.

People were more likely to have a view on the implications for Scotland. More than a third, and just over half of Remain voters, thought Brexit had made Scottish independence in the foreseeable future more likely, though only just over one in five Leave voters agreed.



A border poll?

More than nine out of ten Northern Ireland Catholics thought there should be a referendum on Irish unification, or 'border poll', in the next ten years – including two thirds who thought one should take place in the next five years. More than eight in ten thought a referendum would in fact happen within the next decade, but only 36% thought it would be in the next five years – just over half the proportion who thought it ought to happen on this timescale.



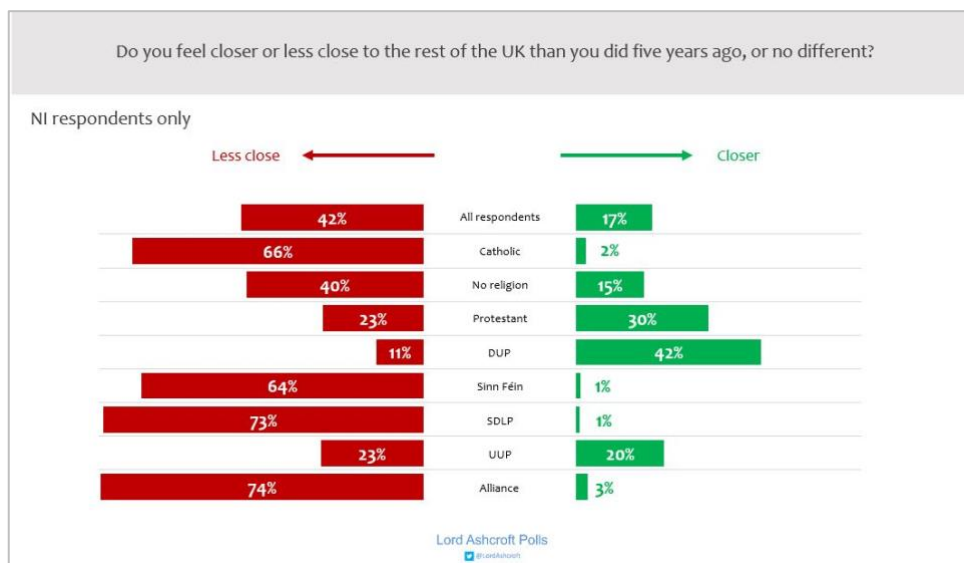
Meanwhile, 43% of Protestants (and 55% of DUP voters) thought there should never be a border poll, but only 13% thought there never would be. One in three Protestants thought a unification referendum would take place within the next ten years.

Strikingly, 12% of Protestants said they thought there should be a border poll within the next five years. Part of the reason may be the longer term pessimism felt by some of the DUP supporters we spoke to in our focus groups: “The sooner we have a border poll the better, because if it’s soon there is more chance of the Unionists winning it;” “There are a lot of Polish immigrants and they’re from the Catholic domain. They will be voting Sinn Fein.”

“The sooner we have a border poll, the better. There’ll be more chance of the Unionists winning it.”

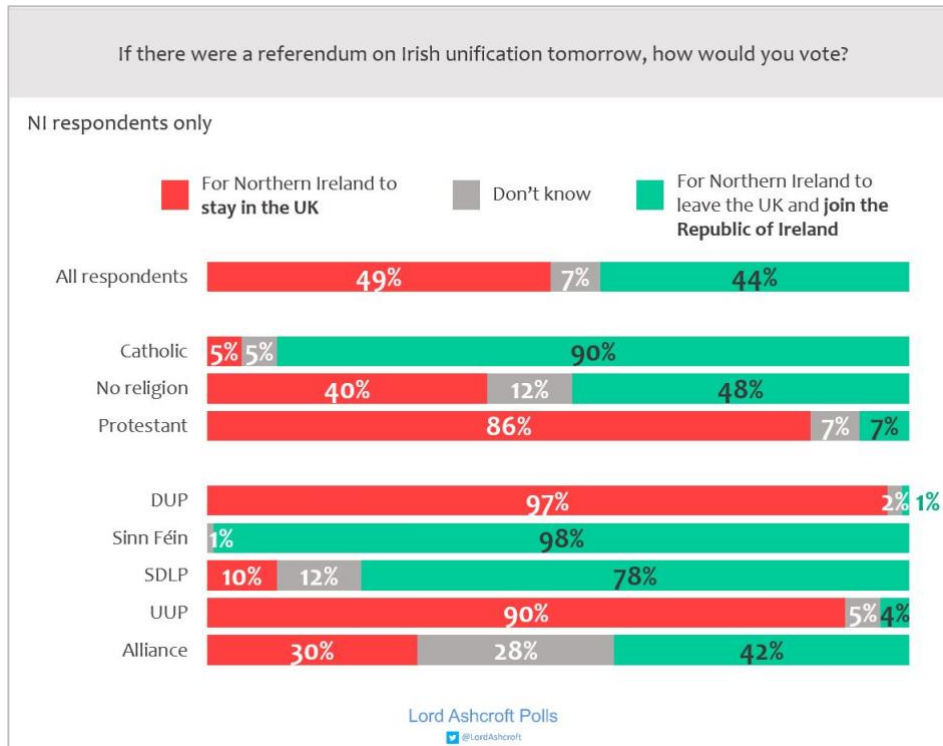
DUP voter, Ballymena

Our survey in Northern Ireland found 42% of respondents – including 17% of Unionists and nearly a quarter of those who voted for the Ulster Unionist Party – saying they felt less close to the rest of the UK than they did five years ago.



If there were a referendum tomorrow...

We asked people in Northern Ireland how they would vote in a border poll tomorrow. The result was that 49% said they would vote to stay in the UK, while 44% would vote to leave the UK and join the Republic of Ireland; 7% said they didn't know.



Catholics sided with unification by 90% to 5%, with 5% undecided, and 98% of Sinn Fein supporters said they would vote for unification. Protestants favoured remaining in the UK by the slightly smaller margin of 86% to 7%, with 7% undecided. Nearly eight out of ten SDLP voters said they would vote for unification. A plurality of Alliance Party voters said they would back unification, but nearly three in ten said they did not know how they would vote if a referendum were held tomorrow. This reflects what we heard from younger Protestant Alliance voters in our focus groups: while most of them favoured remaining in the UK, this was not a universal response: “It depends what the Brexit outcome is;” “I would be open to hearing what the South had to offer. It’s purely economical now.”

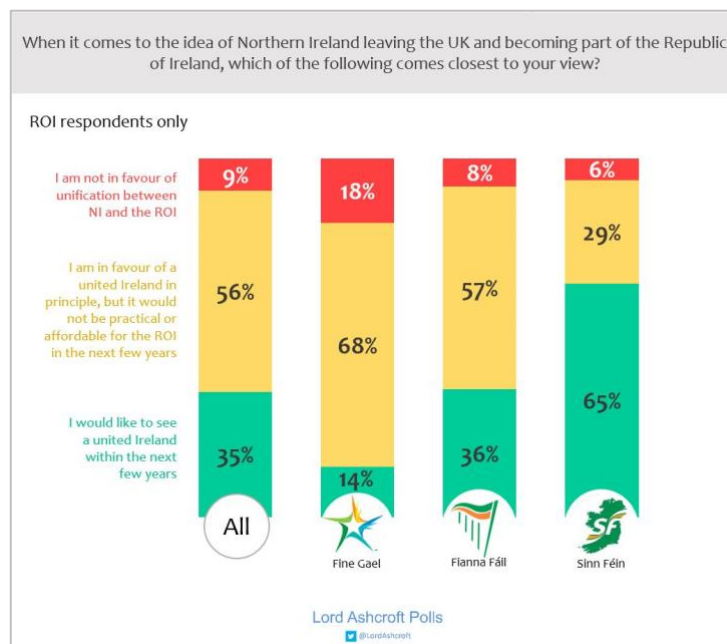
It takes two

Our focus groups in the Republic were somewhat ambivalent to the idea of Irish unification, at least in the short term: “I would love Northern Ireland to be part of this country but we can’t afford it. It’s a black hole that the British government pours money into. We would wake up on 1st January with a £12 billion deficit;” “We’re so much better than forty years ago, but they’ve stagnated. Isn’t 60% of their economy reliant on the public sector?” Some even seemed disturbed by the idea that Brexit might be the spur to a border poll: “Would it just be the North who get to vote?”

“I would love Northern Ireland to be part of this country, but we can’t afford it.”
Fine Gael voter, Dublin

None of those we spoke to expected any such change in the foreseeable future: “The politicians have to say they want a united Ireland but I don’t think it’s really on their list.”

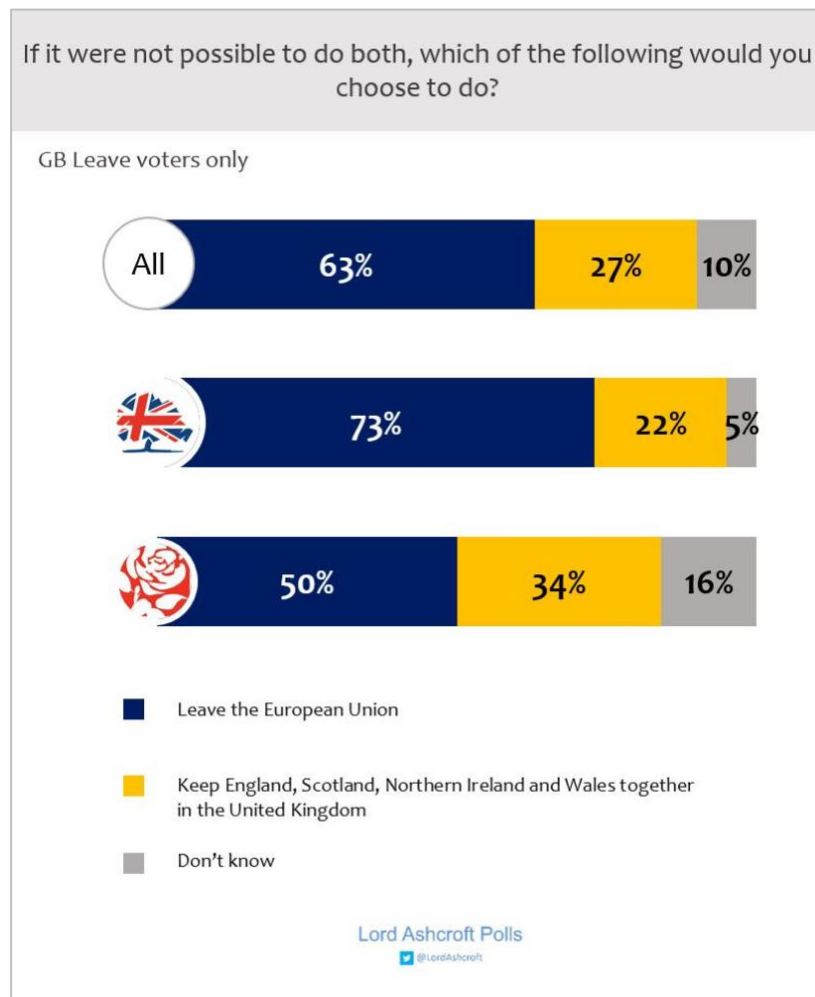
This was confirmed in our poll. While just over one third said they “would like to see a united Ireland within the next few years,” more than half (and two thirds of Fine Gael voters) said they were “in favour of a united Ireland in principle, but it would not be practical or affordable for the Republic of Ireland in the next few years.” They were also much more likely to think that Northern Ireland would benefit most from unification than to think the Republic would do so. Around a third thought they would benefit equally, but a quarter thought neither would do so.



Decision time, again

We asked Leave voters in Great Britain what they would rather do if it were not possible to do both: leave the European Union, or keep England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales together in the United Kingdom.

More than six in ten (63%), including nearly three quarters of Conservatives and half of Labour voters, said they would choose leaving the EU. This included around half those aged 18 to 49, and seven in ten of those aged 50 or over.



Full poll results

1,666 adults in Northern Ireland were interviewed online between 24 and 28 May 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Northern Ireland.

1,500 adults in the Republic of Ireland were interviewed online between 31 May and 5 June 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in the Republic of Ireland.

3,294 adults in England, Scotland and Wales were interviewed online between 29 and 31 May 2018. Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

Full data tables are available at LordAshcroftPolls.com

NI: Do you think Northern Ireland is on the right track, or heading in the wrong direction?
ROI: From what you know or have heard, do you think Northern Ireland is on the right track, or heading in the wrong direction?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
NI is on the right track	25	5	45	5	43	6	51	55	5	3	29	6
NI is heading in the wrong direction	64	90	39	91	41	87	34	28	90	92	53	91
Don't know	11	5	16	5	16	7	15	16	6	4	17	3

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
NI is on the right track	13	11	15	10
NI is heading in the wrong direction	55	55	53	67
Don't know	32	34	32	23

ROI: Do you think Ireland is on the right track, or heading in the wrong direction?
NI: From what you know or have heard, do you think the Republic of Ireland is on the right track, or heading in the wrong direction?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
ROI is on the right track	55	92	19	92	24	82	15	10	95	89	29	81
ROI is heading in the wrong direction	35	6	65	5	62	9	73	76	3	4	55	7
Don't know	10	3	16	3	14	9	12	14	2	7	16	12

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
ROI is on the right track	70	80	66	61
ROI is heading in the wrong direction	13	4	12	27
Don't know	17	15	22	11

NI & ROI: Over the next 10 years, do you expect Northern Ireland to become a better or worse place to live, or to stay about the same?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Expect NI to become a better place to live	27	9	45	10	42	10	50	54	9	7	32	12
Expect NI to become a worse place to live	46	75	19	75	24	66	19	11	79	70	31	59
Expect NI to stay about the same	22	10	31	10	29	18	27	30	7	19	31	22
Don't know	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	7

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
Expect NI to become a better place to live	16	10	20	16
Expect NI to become a worse place to live	34	33	38	44
Expect NI to stay about the same	32	34	31	21
Don't know	18	22	11	19

NI & ROI: Over the next 10 years, do you expect the Republic of Ireland to become a better or worse place to live, or to stay about the same?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Expect ROI to become a better place to live	49	83	18	83	23	71	17	12	86	76	24	68
Expect ROI to become a worse place to live	21	4	37	4	37	5	44	43	2	5	36	5
Expect ROI to stay about the same	23	11	32	11	29	18	29	33	11	15	29	20
Don't know	8	2	13	2	11	6	10	12	1	3	12	6

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
Expect ROI to become a better place to live	45	52	45	39
Expect ROI to become a worse place to live	18	13	16	28
Expect ROI to stay about the same	33	30	38	29
Don't know	3	5	1	4

ROI: If there were to be a referendum on Ireland's membership of the European Union, how would you vote?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
For Ireland to remain in the EU	80	86	82	80
For Ireland to leave the EU	16	12	11	17
Don't know	4	2	7	3

ROI: How do you feel about Ireland's membership of the European Union?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
Very positive	36	43	37	32
Fairly positive	40	42	36	36
Neither positive nor negative	10	6	15	12
Fairly negative	9	6	8	13
Very negative	6	3	3	5
Don't know	0	0	0	1

ROI: As you know, the UK has voted to leave the European Union. Which of the following best describes your feelings about this?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
I'm glad that the UK is leaving the EU	14	10	15	16
I'm unhappy that the UK is leaving the EU	72	77	78	67
It doesn't matter to me either way	14	13	7	17

ROI: Thinking about the UK's own best interests, do you think it made the right decision to leave the EU, or the wrong decision?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
The UK made the right decision to leave the EU	20	15	22	21
The UK made the wrong decision to leave the EU	74	83	77	73
Don't know	6	2	2	6

GB: Which of the following best describes you?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
I voted to remain in the EU, and I would still like to stop Brexit happening if at all possible	30	12	49	65	69	1
I voted to remain in the EU, but it is right for Brexit to go ahead given the result of the referendum	11	15	13	13	25	2
I voted to leave the EU, and I still want Brexit to go ahead	38	66	23	17	2	84
I voted to leave the EU, but I have changed my mind and would now prefer to remain	4	3	4	3	0	8
I didn't vote	13	3	7	2	2	3
Don't know	4	2	3	0	2	3

GB: Thinking about the Brexit negotiations and decisions about the UK's future outside the EU, do you think these are proceeding...

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Too slowly	62	69	61	61	55	76
At about the right pace	15	21	12	12	15	15
Too quickly	5	1	7	11	9	0
Don't know	18	9	20	16	20	8

GB – those saying 'too slowly': Which do you think is most to blame for the slow pace of the Brexit negotiations and decisions about the UK's future outside the EU?

Great Britain Those saying Brexit negotiations proceeding too slowly %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Theresa May	17	6	27	15	19	15
Politicians in Britain who want a hard Brexit	17	6	27	34	35	5
Politicians in Britain who want a soft Brexit or to stop Brexit altogether	30	46	17	16	10	45
The EU and other European governments	21	33	11	16	16	25
Other	3	1	4	8	6	2
Don't know	12	7	14	10	14	8

GB: As things stand, the UK is due to leave the EU officially in March 2019. There will then be an 'implementation period' of one year, during which the changes agreed in any Brexit deal would take effect. If the government were to say that some issues would take longer to resolve, and the 'implementation period' therefore needed to last for a further two or three years after 2020 – during which the UK would still abide by EU regulations and customs rules – what would you think?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Getting our post-Brexit arrangements right is more important than doing them quickly, so a longer implementation period after 2020 would be acceptable	45	33	60	73	73	23
Saying we need a longer implementation period would just be an excuse for staying in the EU as long as possible – we should leave as currently planned	36	58	23	18	12	65
Don't know	18	10	17	9	15	13

ROI: How, if at all, do you think Brexit will affect the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
It will make the relationship closer	16	12	10	18
It will make the relationship more distant	54	62	57	53
It will make no difference to the relationship	20	18	24	20
Don't know	10	8	9	9

ROI: How, if at all, do you think Brexit will affect the relationship between the UK as a whole and the Republic of Ireland?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
It will make the relationship closer	7	5	6	8
It will make the relationship more distant	68	70	68	69
It will make no difference to the relationship	17	17	22	19
Don't know	7	8	3	4

GB: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view about Northern Ireland?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK	28	37	24	28	30	29
Northern Ireland should no longer be part of the UK	8	6	9	6	9	7
I don't have a view – it's for the people of Northern Ireland to decide	57	54	61	65	57	59
Don't know	7	3	5	1	5	5

GB – those saying ‘it’s for the people of NI to decide’: If the people of Northern Ireland were to vote in a referendum to leave the UK, which of the following would be your view?

Great Britain Those saying ‘for the people of Northern Ireland to decide’ %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
I would be sorry to see Northern Ireland leave the UK	29	32	28	39	33	27
I would be happy to see Northern Ireland leave the UK	9	11	7	6	7	11
I wouldn’t mind either way	63	57	64	55	60	62

GB: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view about Scotland?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Scotland should remain part of the UK	44	56	39	54	48	46
Scotland should no longer be part of the UK	10	10	7	6	9	12
I don’t have a view – it’s for the people of Scotland to decide	39	32	48	38	38	38
Don’t know	7	2	6	2	4	4

GB – those saying ‘it’s for the people of Scotland to decide’: If the people of Scotland were to vote in a referendum to leave the UK, which of the following would be your view?

Great Britain Those saying ‘for the people of Scotland to decide’ %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
I would be sorry to see Scotland leave the UK	35	30	43	51	48	29
I would be happy to see Scotland leave the UK	11	18	6	10	6	16
I wouldn’t mind either way	54	52	50	38	46	55

NI: Do you think there should be a referendum on Irish unification (a 'border poll')?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Yes, in the next 5 years	37	70	9	67	12	51	15	6	78	45	14	34
Yes, in the next 5 to 10 years	17	26	7	26	10	25	7	4	20	40	12	37
Yes, but not in the next 10 years	20	4	33	5	31	14	28	31	2	13	33	19
Never	23	0	46	1	43	6	48	55	0	1	39	2
Don't know	3	0	4	1	3	4	1	3	0	1	1	7

NI: Do you think there will be a referendum on Irish unification (a 'border poll')?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Yes, in the next 5 years	21	38	8	36	8	28	10	7	46	18	9	14
Yes, in the next 5 to 10 years	33	45	21	45	24	40	23	18	43	48	24	48
Yes, but not in the next 10 years	30	13	45	14	44	24	41	45	9	27	49	28
Never	7	0	14	0	13	2	15	18	0	2	7	1
Don't know	9	4	12	5	11	7	10	12	3	5	11	9

NI: If there were a referendum on Irish unification tomorrow, how would you vote?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
For NI to stay in the UK	49	2	93	5	86	22	88	97	0	10	90	30
For NI to leave the UK and join the ROI	44	95	2	90	7	68	9	1	98	78	4	42
Don't know	7	4	5	5	7	10	3	2	1	12	5	28

NI, ROI & GB: Do you think Brexit makes Irish unification in the foreseeable future more likely, less likely, or has it made no difference?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Brexit makes Irish unification more likely	59	95	25	94	30	86	20	16	97	92	38	86
Brexit makes no difference	29	3	52	3	48	10	55	58	2	6	45	9
Brexit makes Irish unification less likely	10	0	19	1	18	2	22	24	1	2	10	2
Don't know	3	1	4	1	4	3	3	2	0	1	6	3

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
Brexit makes Irish unification more likely	41	40	37	57
Brexit makes no difference	29	34	33	18
Brexit makes Irish unification less likely	22	21	21	19
Don't know	8	5	9	5

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Brexit makes Irish unification more likely	27	19	35	45	38	18
Brexit makes Irish unification less likely	7	6	8	7	8	6
Brexit makes no difference	31	45	22	23	24	42
Don't know	35	30	35	24	30	34

GB: And do you think Brexit makes Scottish independence in the foreseeable future more likely, less likely, or has it made no difference?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Brexit makes Scottish independence more likely	35	21	48	53	51	21
Brexit makes Scottish independence less likely	6	8	4	5	5	7
Brexit makes no difference	31	48	20	24	21	45
Don't know	29	23	28	18	23	27

NI: Do you feel closer or less close to the rest of the UK than you did 5 years ago, or no different?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Closer	17	1	33	2	30	3	38	42	1	1	20	3
No different	41	34	49	32	47	36	45	47	35	26	56	24
Less close	42	65	17	66	23	60	17	11	64	73	23	74
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ROI: When it comes to the idea of Northern Ireland leaving the UK and becoming part of the Republic of Ireland, which of the following comes closest to your view?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
I would like to see a united Ireland within the next few years	35	14	36	65
I am in favour of a united Ireland in principle, but it would not be practical or affordable for the ROI in the next few years	56	68	57	29
I am not in favour of unification between NI and the ROI	9	18	8	6

ROI: If Northern Ireland were to leave the UK and become part of the Republic of Ireland, who do you think would benefit most?

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
People in what is now NI	23	28	20	20
People in what is now the ROI	6	0	4	17
Both would benefit equally	36	30	40	47
Neither would benefit	27	33	30	14
Don't know	8	9	6	2

NI, ROI, GB: The UK is currently part of a customs union with the EU. A customs union is when a group of countries allow tariff-free trade between them without any customs checks, and they all agree to apply the same tariffs to goods from external countries. If the UK leaves the customs union when it leaves the EU, this could mean the UK no longer having to abide by EU regulations and being able to do free trade deals with countries outside the EU, but it could also mean a ‘hard border’ with customs checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Several solutions have been suggested to the issue of Brexit and the Irish border. Please rank the following from 1 to 4, where 1 means you think it is the best option and 4 means you think it is the worst option.

Northern Ireland Rank 1-4 (% naming as first choice)	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
The whole of the UK leaving the EU customs union, even if this means customs checks at the border between NI and the ROI	1 (36)	4 (5)	1 (67)	4 (5)	1 (62)	4 (9)	1 (76)	1 (80)	4 (3)	4 (7)	1 (46)	4 (7)
NI leaving the UK and becoming part of the ROI, thereby staying in the EU	2 (32)	1 (72)	4 (2)	1 (68)	4 (4)	1 (47)	3 (8)	4 (2)	1 (80)	1 (42)	4 (3)	3 (19)
The whole of the UK staying in the EU customs union or starting a new customs partnership with the EU, even if this means the UK still being subject to EU regulations and not being able to do its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU	3 (22)	2 (13)	2 (23)	2 (16)	2 (25)	2 (31)	2 (9)	2 (13)	2= (9)	2 (37)	2 (39)	1 (52)
NI remaining in the EU customs union or being part of a new customs partnership with the EU while the rest of the UK leaves, with a border in the Irish Sea and customs checks between Britain and the island of Ireland	4 (11)	3 (11)	3 (8)	3 (11)	3 (9)	3 (13)	4 (7)	3 (6)	2= (9)	3 (14)	3 (12)	2 (23)

Republic of Ireland Rank 1-4 (% naming as first choice)	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
The whole of the UK staying in the EU customs union or starting a new customs partnership with the EU, even if this means the UK still being subject to EU regulations and not being able to do its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU	1 (44)	1 (55)	1 (47)	2 (33)
Northern Ireland leaving the UK and becoming part of the Republic of Ireland, thereby staying in the EU	2 (21)	4 (12)	3 (20)	1 (37)
Northern Ireland remaining in the EU Customs Union or being part of a new customs partnership with the EU while the rest of the UK leaves, with a border in the Irish Sea and customs checks between Britain and the island of Ireland	3 (21)	2 (19)	2 (22)	4 (15)
The whole of the UK leaving the EU Customs Union, even if this means customs checks at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	4 (14)	3 (14)	4 (11)	3 (15)

Great Britain Rank 1-4 (% naming as first choice)	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
The whole of the UK leaving the EU Customs Union, even if this means customs checks at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	1 (38)	1 (58)	2 (25)	2 (15)	2 (19)	1 (59)
The whole of the UK staying in the EU Customs Union or starting a new customs partnership with the EU, even if this means the UK still being subject to EU laws and regulations and not being able to do its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU	2 (34)	3 (15)	1 (47)	1 (60)	1 (57)	4 (11)
Northern Ireland remaining in the EU Customs Union or being part of a new customs partnership with the EU while the rest of the UK leaves, with a border in the Irish Sea and customs checks between Britain and the island of Ireland	3 (16)	2 (17)	3 (15)	3 (13)	3 (13)	2 (16)
Northern Ireland leaving the UK and becoming part of the Republic of Ireland, thereby staying in the EU	4 (13)	4 (10)	4 (13)	4 (12)	4 (10)	3 (14)

GB: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
NI is part of the UK, so it would be completely unacceptable for it to have a different status in the EU from England, Scotland and Wales	34	46	27	33	32	41
NI having a different status in the EU would not be ideal, but would be acceptable as part of a deal to get a sensible Brexit arrangement	30	31	34	44	36	27
It would be perfectly acceptable for NI to have a different status in the EU from England, Scotland and Wales	14	9	16	10	14	13
<i>Don't know</i>	22	14	22	13	17	19

NI, ROI, GB: Below are some statements that people have made about the issue of Brexit and the Irish border. Please say whether you agree or disagree with each one.

Northern Ireland % 'strongly agree' + 'somewhat agree'	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
A 'hard border' would be likely to create division and provoke paramilitary activity, threatening peace and security	64	91	38	91	42	87	29	25	93	93	48	86
The issue of Brexit and the Irish border is being deliberately exaggerated by politicians and others to suit their own political agenda	60	22	93	23	90	36	93	98	21	25	92	38
Whether or not it is practical, a hard border between NI and ROI would be a very negative symbol	76	99	55	99	57	96	47	43	99	98	65	97
Modern technology would allow any customs checks to be done quickly and easily, so a border would not be damaging or disruptive	45	6	83	6	78	17	86	90	3	11	80	19

Republic of Ireland % 'strongly agree' + 'somewhat agree'	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
A 'hard border' would be likely to create division and provoke paramilitary activity, threatening peace and security	85	87	86	86
The issue of Brexit and the Irish border is being deliberately exaggerated by politicians and others to suit their own political agenda	53	51	48	60
Whether or not it is practical, a hard border between NI and ROI would be a very negative symbol	91	94	91	94
Modern technology would allow any customs checks to be done quickly and easily, so a border would not be damaging or disruptive	37	29	38	41

Great Britain % 'strongly agree' + 'somewhat agree'	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
A 'hard border' would be likely to create division and provoke paramilitary activity, threatening peace and security	55	46	65	70	70	44
The issue of Brexit and the Irish border is being deliberately exaggerated by politicians and others to suit their own political agenda	55	73	45	44	41	74
Whether or not it is practical, a hard border between NI and ROI would be a very negative symbol	59	54	69	82	78	48
Modern technology would allow any customs checks to be done quickly and easily, so a border would not be damaging or disruptive	53	74	39	43	36	72

NI & ROI: Who do you think would be more damaged by the imposition of a 'hard border' – Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland?

Northern Ireland %	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
Northern Ireland	42	74	13	74	16	65	10	6	77	70	22	66
Republic of Ireland	31	2	61	2	56	8	66	70	1	5	45	6
Both equally	22	24	18	23	20	26	15	14	22	25	23	26
Neither	4	0	8	0	7	1	9	9	0	0	10	1
Don't know	1	0	1	0	1	*	1	1	0	0	1	1

Republic of Ireland %	ALL	2016 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE		
		Fine Gael	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein
Northern Ireland	28	24	27	28
Republic of Ireland	21	24	24	24
Both equally	46	46	49	46
Neither	3	5	0	1
Don't know	1	2	0	0

GB: If the UK had to decide between either leaving the EU customs union, or avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which would you prefer?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Leave the EU customs union, even if this meant a hard border with customs checks between NI and the ROI	41	67	25	23	21	66
Avoid creating a hard border between NI and the ROI, even if this meant the UK staying in the EU customs union and not being able to do its own trade deals with non-EU countries	32	14	47	59	55	10
Don't know	27	19	27	18	24	23

GB – those who voted ‘Leave’: If it were not possible to do both, which of the following would you choose to do?

Great Britain EU ‘Leave’ voters %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Leave the European Union	63	73	50	48	-	63
Keep England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales together in the UK	27	22	34	42	-	27
Don't know	10	5	16	10	-	10

NI: When it comes to the final Brexit deal, how important to you is each of the following?
0 = doesn't matter at all, 100 = extremely important

Northern Ireland mean /100	ALL	TRADITION		RELIGION		EU REF VOTE		2017 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE				
		Nationalist	Unionist	Cath	Prot	Remain	Leave	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	APNI
No hard border between NI and ROI	73	94	55	94	57	91	51	48	97	94	60	91
NI and the rest of the UK being treated the same as each other whether they end up being bound by EU rules and regulations or not	50	21	77	21	72	30	76	80	19	29	70	34
The UK being free to negotiate its own free trade deals with countries outside the EU	47	16	80	17	76	21	85	89	13	21	67	28
The UK no longer having to abide by EU rules and regulations	45	14	76	15	72	20	84	85	13	15	60	20
More control over immigration into the UK	44	14	72	15	68	18	78	82	11	17	60	21

GB: Do you think each of the following would change life in Britain for the better, for the worse, or bring no real change at all?

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Leaving all aspects of the EU						
... would change life in Britain much for the better	19	37	9	4	2	39
... somewhat for the better	23	33	15	15	8	39
TOTAL BETTER	42	70	24	19	10	78
... would bring no real change at all	17	13	13	6	11	15
... would change life in Britain somewhat for the worse	22	13	30	35	39	6
... much for the worse	19	4	32	40	40	1
TOTAL WORSE	41	17	62	75	79	7
A Labour government with Jeremy Corbyn as Prime Minister						
... would change life in Britain much for the better	9	1	23	5	14	6
... somewhat for the better	18	1	38	20	29	9
TOTAL BETTER	27	2	61	25	43	15
... would bring no real change at all	22	5	24	24	20	16
... would change life in Britain somewhat for the worse	14	15	10	28	14	14
... much for the worse	37	78	6	23	23	56
TOTAL WORSE	51	93	16	51	37	70

GB: How confident are you that the Prime Minister, Theresa May, and her team will be able to negotiate a good deal for the UK in the Brexit negotiations?

0 = absolutely no confidence, 100 = complete confidence

Great Britain %	ALL	2017 GE VOTE			EU REF VOTE	
		Con	Lab	LD	Remain	Leave
Confidence /100	40	59	25	27	30	50